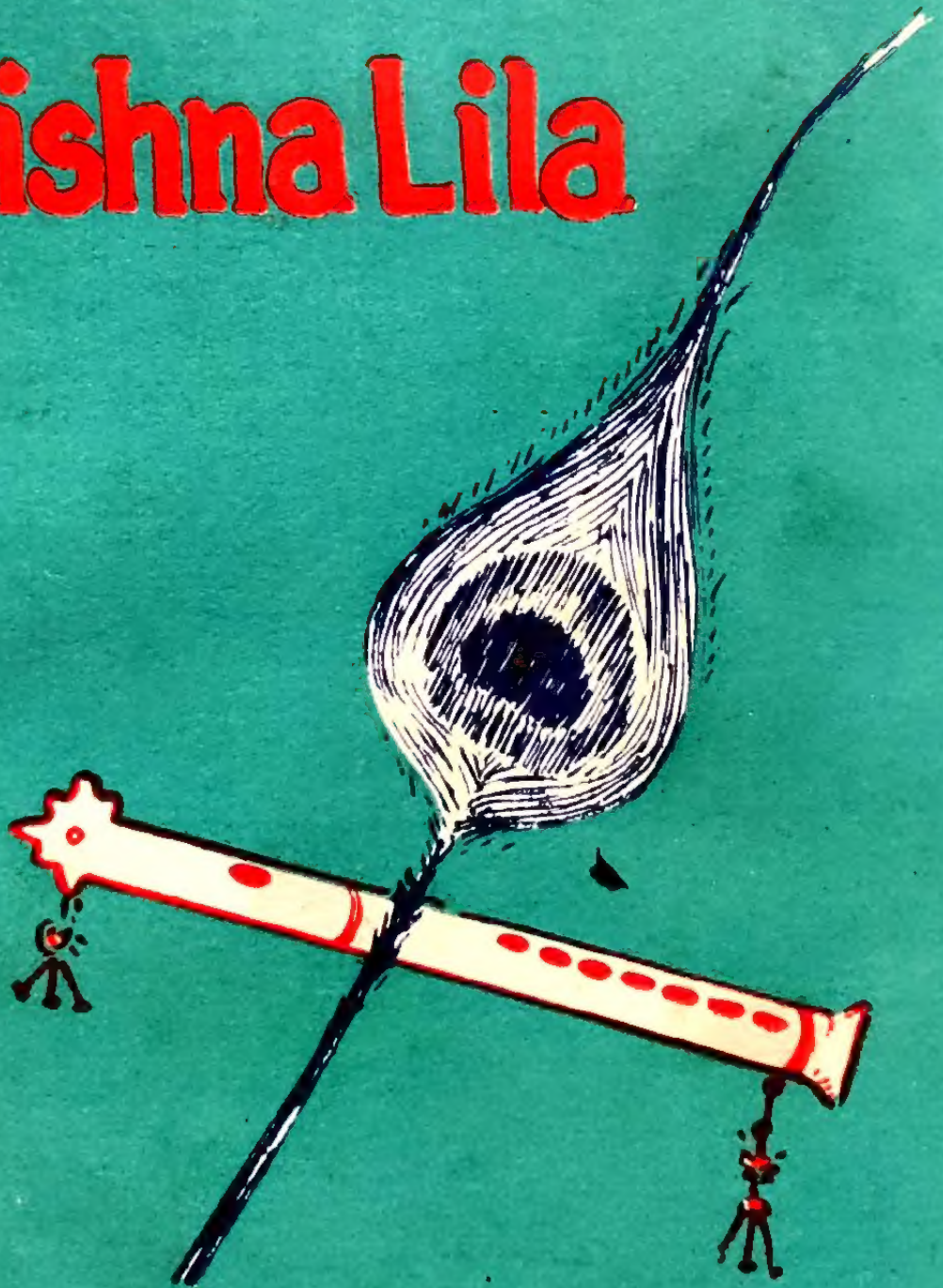


In the Mirror of Krishna Lila



SWAMI SANATAN SHRI



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Swami Sanatan Shri

Sakha Universal Publication

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Publisher's Note

This book is an English translation of the Hindi Book 'Lila Darpan' written by His Holiness Swami Sanatan Shri. The wide acclaim received by the original book and the deep relevance of its message in present times has encouraged us to bring out this translation, with the aim of taking this important message of Shri Krishna's life into every household in the country.

The beauty of 'Lila Darpan' lies in blending of deep philosophy with a poetic and dramatic narration of some of the important events in Shri Krishna's life as enumerated in Srimad Bhagwatam. The divine sport of Lord Krishna—termed 'Lilās' in Hindi—has often been misinterpreted with the result that a highly distorted notion is prevalent, especially among the youth, about them. This has resulted in a tremendous shattering of the faith amongst the modern youth which is further eroded by our educational system which is totally devoid of spiritual content. The result—we already have a generation of youth who are not only ignorant but positively abhorrent of moral and spiritual values. At such a critical juncture, a correct interpretation of the divine sport of Lord Krishna—as beautifully expounded by Swamiji—can play a crucial role in reawakening the faith—that Shraddha—which is a pre-requisite for any moral or spiritual upliftment of the masses. 'Lila Darpan' not only fulfils this need, but goes much further. By bringing out the true spiritual import of these Lilas, which Swamiji terms as the Rahasya (secret) behind them, he has unravelled their perennial message for mankind, by following which one can, even in modern times, smoothly accomplish his spiritual journey. A paragraph from the book illustrates this:

"Only he, who kills 'Pootna', 'Aghasur', 'Bakasur' and

other 'demons'¹ in the childhood itself and destroys the 'Kansa' in his eleventh year. . . . only he lives a meaningful life. Only he can escape this dragnet of 'Asti' and 'Prapti'. But 'Jarasandha' will continue its onslaughts on this Mathura—your body. Only he, who lives subservient to his Atman—the Krishna—can defeat this 'Jarasandha' seventeen times. 'Jarasandha' will most certainly break the joints (Sandhis) of sensualists. The eighteenth time, Jarasandha will attack along with 'Kalyavan.' Only he can escape this attack, who enters Dwarika (the Brahm-Randhra—the seat of Atman!) via the Pravarshan mountain (where there is continuous rain (Varsha) of the worship of the Lord!). Jarasandha can do him no harm. Kalyavan (the time!) will be finished. . . . The Yogi is beyond time! . . ."

Lila Darpan is thus not only a beautiful exposition of Lord Krishna's Divine Sport and an unravelling of their mystic significance, but it can also serve as a guide to the strife torn humanity, for it brings out clearly the true purpose of human life and indicates the path to achieve it. Lila Darpan also has a message for the intelligentsia, the planners and leaders of the society. With the insight of a great visionary, Swamiji has perspicuously brought out the deficiencies of our education system and the distortions in the sacred institutions of marriage and temple, and revealed their pristine glorious form which could tremendously strengthen the moral fabric of our society.

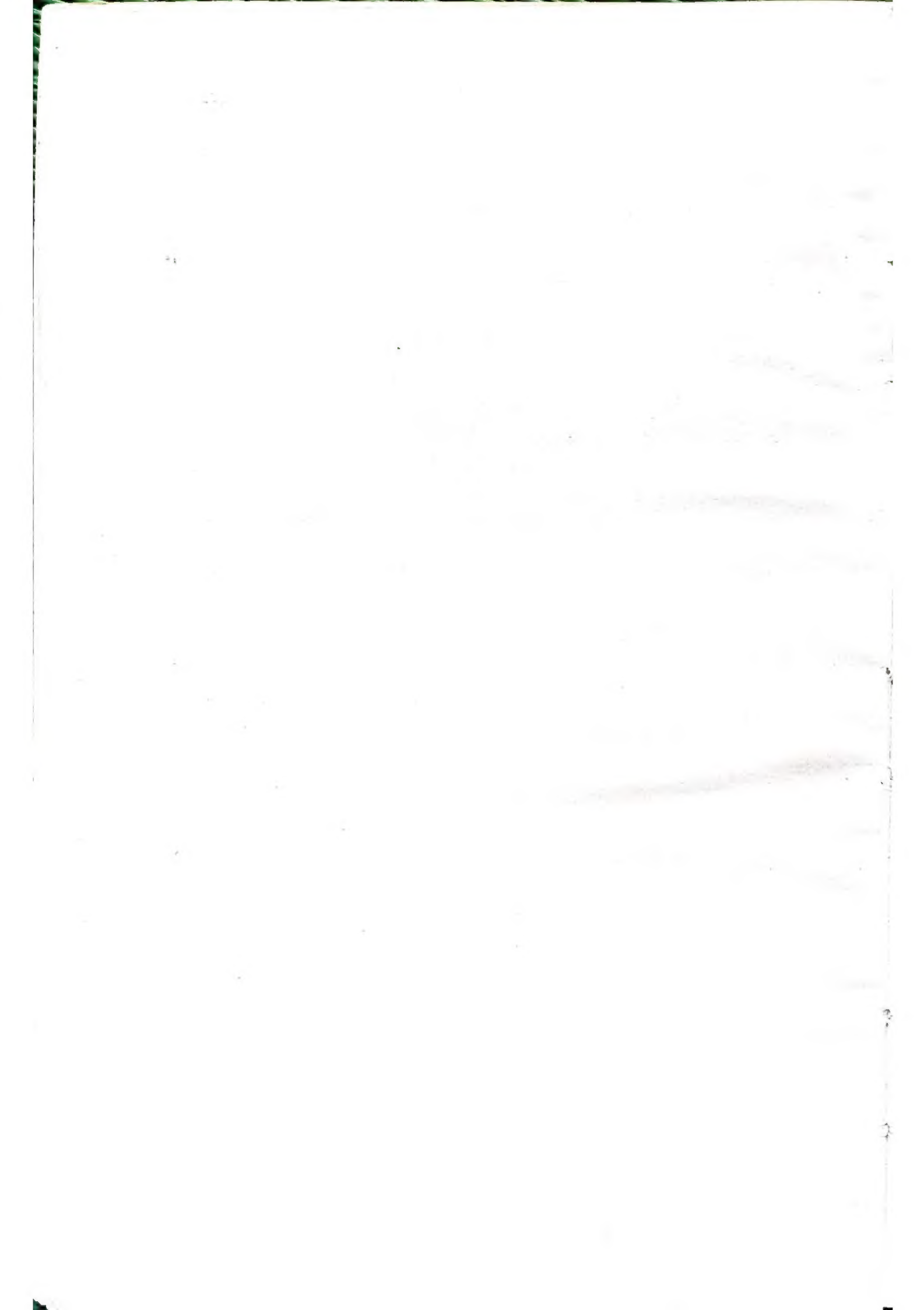
'Lila Darpan' is essentially written in the form of a discourse which lends a unique charm to it, quite like that of a popular novel. In any translation, the charm and fluency of the original language is bound to suffer, especially when there is an attempt to partition the narration into chapters. We would therefore strongly recommend to the reader to read the original text also (if possible) after having realised the importance of the message through this translation.

Swamiji has been kind enough to bless this venture and this manuscript has been read out to him. However, for any discrepancies which may have arisen out of this translation, we beg forgiveness from the reader.

1. पूतना, अघासुर, बकासुर, कंस

Lastly, we would like to earnestly appeal to the readers to share this book with their friends and thus participate in this holy Yajna of spiritual reawakening of masses.

Sakha Universal



CHAPTER I

Krishna is Born

Dwapar Yuga¹ was nearing an end. Kansa, son of King Ugrasena, had terrified the globe by his atrocities and sinful deeds. He had imprisoned his sagely father. Repression, atrocity and ill behaviour were his hall-marks. He had married his sister to Vasudev. But when he learnt that her eighth child would be the cause of his death, then, on the instigation of Narada, he imprisoned both Vasudev and Devaki and started killing their every new-born child. In the seventh conception, Balrama was to incarnate, but by the divine lila he was transferred to Rohini, Vasudev's second wife who was staying with Yashoda, (wife of his friend Nand²), and instead of Balrama the body of a still born babe was shown to Kansa. The eighth child of Devaki was expected next.

The dark night of Ashtami³ . . . In the damp cell of Kansa's prison are lying handcuffed, in iron fetters, brave, noble Vasudev and pure, chaste Devaki, unconscious due to extreme labour pains. The gatekeepers are vigilant, they are alarmed at every little noise. . . . Soon, the atmosphere will be rent with the cries of a newborn, they would run and inform the king Kansa who would reward them profusely . . . Even a slight sound startles them into action! Those fearsome faces carrying spears in their hands, staring expectantly at the prisoners! Vasudev trembles even at the very thought of events to come! The dark

1. One of the four mythological eras based on the belief that the solar galaxy is going around a constellation (Brahmalok) with a period of 4,32,000x71 years. (See Swamiji's Sanatan Dharm Ki Prishtha Bhoomi. . .)
2. Nand, a friend of Vasudev, was the chieftain of the cowherds of Gokul.
3. The eighth day of lunar fortnight.

night of Ashtami, slipping away quietly, yet whispering uncertainty into Vasudev's mind! The flickering gleams of light emanating from the torches held by the gatekeepers make the already tense atmosphere of the cell even more frightening. The air is still and the sky is overcast with dense black clouds. Dazzling lightning is followed by heart rending rumbling of the clouds and silence once again! Vasudev can even hear the sound of his breath! Two dumbfounded, stunned souls trapped in a damp cell overpowered by pain, fear, helplessness! Guileless, yet guilty!

Kansa has sentenced his innocent, chaste sister and her husband to a long stay in prison. Why? For what crime? Kansa is afraid that the eighth child of Devaki is likely to be the cause of his death, and therefore, having imprisoned her, he kills her every issue soon after its birth. Seven children have already been done away with, and the eighth is expected anytime. Pure, innocent Devaki is lying unconscious and blameless Vasudev is sad, fearful and so helpless.

Oh Lord! What is this lila of yours! In this Divine play, are you reflecting my own truths, for my sake? Haven't I also imprisoned truth and justice, like Vasudev and Devaki, innumerable times? Why? Because that truth was against my narrow gains. And, therefore in the prison of untruth I have been, not unlike Kansa, imprisoning truth (Vasudev) and justice (Devaki). Hadn't Kansa also imprisoned innocent and pure Vasudev and Devaki believing them to be against his "Good". I have also crucified truth and justice, innumerable times, at the altar of falsehood believing them to be against my "Good" and the "Good" of (so-called) "my-people". Kansa committed only one sin, but myself! Oh Gopal! I can't even count! Decidedly, This lila has been enacted by you only to show me the Kansa hidden in my bosom. In the mirror of your lila, I am able to see my own countless faces! The false egos, vanities and blinding attachments, Oh Lord! are vanishing as I see my real face in this divine mirror provided by your lilas. Oh, my mind! Give up this Kansa-like posture, become pure and guileless, and sing the glories of the Lord! pray, Govind Hari¹!

1. A name of Lord Krishna. Other names are Govind, Kanhaiya.

The moments are ticking away. Chained and fettered, Vasudev turns around and casts a glance at unconscious Devaki. His heart cries out in despair. "Oh! this is all that I could give you Devaki! Everytime you became a mother, hardly had you fondled your child that you again fainted on listening to his thin cry! I couldn't even collect the torn pieces of flesh of my innocent child! Those innocent children, the fulfilment of our dreams, were torn asunder before our own eyes! Even before completion, the dreams were dashed and I kept on watching silently, helplessly like a coward! Alas! had I not married you or, rather than agreeing to this torture, embraced death myself. Fie Vasudev! You couldn't even protect an innocent helpless lady. Fie on your being a Kshatriya¹! The warrior whose valour was praised even by his enemies, is today in such a despicable state. . . .

And then, all of a sudden the prison cell is illumined with a celestial glow. Startled Vasudev lifts up his tired eyelids. Lo! What does he behold? Lord Mahavishnu in His divine four-armed posture has appeared in the prison. On beholding the divine form embellished with mace, councshell, discus and lotus, Vasudev is enthralled and feels immense peace and strength. He bows before the Lord Narayan. Folding his chained hands, he tries to inch forward towards the Lord but the fetters in his legs prevent him, he staggers a bit and falls down. Chained and fettered Vasudev prostrates before the Lord Mahavishnu from a distance. An unending stream of tears flows down his eyes. He is not even able to pray properly. Just as a child, tormented for a long time bursts into tears on seeing a dear kin, similar is Vasudev's state today. Mahavishnu consoles Vasudev and says "Vasudev! To end your torture, to lighten the earth from the evils of demonic Kansa and to reestablish Dharma and truth, I am soon going to incarnate myself. As soon as I appear from the womb of Devaki place me in a basket, keep the basket on your head and leave me at the residence of Nand and bring his newborn babe, Yogmaya² from there."

Vasudev said, "Thy will be done, My Lord!" and Lord

-
1. Kshatriya-one of the four castes in age old India, entrusted with the task of administering and protecting the State.
 2. Incarnation of the delusory powers of Lord.

Mahavishnu became invisible. Soon Devaki delivered and the Lord manifested in the form of a newborn child. . . Devaki is still unconscious. Vasudev is perplexed. He does not understand, what he should do now. How should he carry out the instructions of Mahavishnu? Hands are in chains, the legs are fettered and these are tightly anchored to the walls of the prison. The prison gates are well guarded and the doors are securedly locked. Vasudev is despondent. How can he take young Kanhaiya to Gokul?

He silently prays, "Oh! Narayan! What have you wrought? Oh Lord! how can I take you to the village of Nand? Shouldn't you have untied my chains and fetters! Narayan, even the doors are locked and the guards are watchful. How can this helpless Vasudev take you away? Lord, why this ordeal?"

An unceasing stream flows down the eyes of innocent Vasudev. The dark dense clouds are pouring heavily outside the prison walls. In the cell beneath two dense eyebrows, tear-streams flow like Ganga and Yamuna, from the closed eyes of Vasudev. There is a fearful storm raging outside and Vasudev's inside is also raging with no less a violent storm. What to do? Vasudev, how would you take this newborn child to the village of Nand? Narayan, what is this lila of yours?

Vasudev trapped inside the prison cell is thinking. This Jiva¹ caught in the prison of delusion, chained by attachments and desires and tied by the fetters of ego and ignorance is thinking! The lust, greed and anger are guarding this prison and its gates are locked by the narrow-minded possessiveness. How to follow the divine path? Vasudev! In this divine lila-darpan you are truly reflecting my ignorance. From all sides I have been tied by Kansa, and that is why, Lord! I haven't been able to move even one step in your direction.

I keep cherishing that first my desires and wishes be fulfilled. The so-believed kith and kin be well settled, married, and what not! Let me be free from this work and then that work, and then I would meditate on you, Lord! In such wishful thinking, this Jiva has been progressively chained. Vasudev! Isn't this the lila being staged by you for my sake! To present my ignorance before me, to

1. Jiva (जीव) literally translated as creature; in Vedanta philosophy refers to the misidentification with "non-self".

show the way out of my dilemma in the path to Lord, you are today enacting this lila and melting in grief in the prison-cell. So am I, caught in the prison of desires (vasnas), in extreme grief, pining for you, my Lord! You have shown me my state, now depict the way out also, oh Lord! Great one, I bow down to you a million times! Be my divine counsel. Show me the road leading to Gopal; The divine Mantra¹ leading to freedom from this prison.

As emotions subside, it occurs to Vasudev that nothing would be gained by just wailing. "Let me try to obey Lord's command, as far as possible. This alone is the right thing to do. Let me follow the command of the Lord, the fruit thereof is his prerogative. He had said, "Keep me in a basket and place the basket on your head". Let me do at least this much". Thinking so, innocent Vasudev lifted the child Kanhaiya with his chained hands and placed him in the basket. And when he placed the basket on his head, do you know what happened!

The chains and fetters fell away automatically. As if by magic, the gatekeepers went into deep sleep. The big locks on the prison doors fell down and the doors opened one after another. Vasudev, filled with wonder and bliss, holding his little Kanhaiya safely atop his head, walked out of prison. The whole world was fast asleep. Vasudev was advancing towards Gokul which was expectantly awake. Whenever Lord appears, the sensuous are asleep. The dedicated devotees are awake and only they get His glimpse and obeying the divine commands, they add to their virtues.

Do you see something in this lila? Do you understand something? When Lord Narayan was himself present before Vasudev, his chains and fetters remained intact. But when he placed the child Gopal on his head, his bonds opened automatically. Guards went into sleep and the locks were broken. Here is the solution! Look into this lila darpan! You haven't been able to do even this! When the bondages of an innocent sage like Vasudev did not open on seeing Lord Mahavishnu himself, how can your bondage be cut just by offering a few flowers and statutory visits to a temple! Think! Naive devotee!

The bonds opened only when the child Kanhaiya was placed on the head. Enshrine the thought of Lord Krishna in the

1. Mantra (मन्त्र)—a word, or phrase with divine powers.

"basket" of your head—all the chains and fetters would automatically vanish! Alas! Where is the space for Krishna in this mind. It is filled to the brim with attachments, wordly desires, fault finding, lust, anger, hatred, avarice, possessiveness, mis-conceived notions of 'mine' and 'thine'. . . . Alas! my mind has become a bin for the garbage of the world. And that's why I never met you, oh Gopal! My mind was meant to enshrine little Kanhaiya but it remained filled with dirty thoughts of the entire world. How could these chains be broken? This Kansa of blind attachments repeatedly killed my nascent Godly aspirations and dragged me into the marshy land of worldliness, and I was again and again caught helplessly in the prison of the world.

Oh Lord! This is the secret of your divine lila. In order to show to Jiva its true picture, to remove his ignorance, to show him a simple way out of the dilemmas of life, you incarnate yourself in every age. The merciful one! the great deliverer! You once again enacted this lila for my sake. And even then if I shouldn't be awake to the reality, shouldn't tread your path, then truly, fie on me! One who is not awake now, would never be awake. Oh, my mind! Pray to dear Gopal! Enshrine Krishna in the mind and the chains and fetters would all be broken. You would easily cross this ocean of the world! Govind Hari!

Vasudev is completely overwhelmed by wonder, bliss and the feeling of serving the Lord. His mind is buoyant like that of a young adolescent boy. His body is activated and enthused as if energised by some divine power. He feels that he can even run his way to Gokul. The fatigue and weariness of long imprisonment, the exhaustion—all have vanished. As if Vasudev has once again become youthful. Thinking only of the beautiful face of little Kanhaiya lying in the basket on his head, and recalling the figure of Lord Narayan, Vasudev is moving briskly free from all fear and anxiety. There is bliss all around. Vasudev is blessed. He is submerged in that ocean of bliss, for a drop of which even the greatest sages and devotees are always longing. He is not worried about Devaki. No fear that the guards would be awake. Vasudev's mind is completely submerged in the thoughts of Krishna, where is the scope for worldly thoughts?

Vasudev has plugged himself in the service of that supreme Lord who cut his chains and fetters, who in fact is the creator of this universe, of Devaki and Vasudev himself. How could the

question of worrying about Devaki and this world arise? I should do the task enjoined upon me by the Lord with care, honesty and devotion, being an efficient instrument in His hands! Let Him worry about the fruits of these actions! This is what Vasudev is showing to us through this Lila. Oh Jiva! Adopt this blissful Mantra in daily life! Take this message of Janmashtami¹! Enshrine little Kanhaiya in your thoughts! Purify your mind by throwing away worldly squalor and replacing it by thoughts of Lord Krishna and perform your duties merrily like Vasudev. Freed from worries and even thoughts of fruits of your actions, enjoy every moment of your life. Remain immersed in the nectar of this Lila enacted by Vasudev for your sake. Today is Janmashtami. Embellish this temple—your body—and install Krishna in it! And then with closed eyes enjoy the beauty of his majestic form! Govind Hari!

Immersed in bliss, Vasudev is going to Gokul. Fearful storm and torrential rain are not able to frighten him. The heavy showers are giving him immense pleasure. He feels that Lord's grace is pouring on him. Gusty winds accompanying the violent storm appear to him like gentle fragrant breezes.

No storm of the material world can cause sorrow to such a jiva, who has enshrined Gopal in his mind! He, who is afraid of worldly storms, has not firmly established his mind in Gopal. He has not as yet truly enjoyed the nectar of Lila, and seen his real self reflected in this Lila Darpan. A devotee (Bhakta) is one who is never separated (Vibhakta) from the thought of Krishna. The devotee is ever happy, always free from fear and eternally blissful. The wordly person (sansarin) is always sorrowful, frightened and immersed in pain and anguish. This is the difference between a devotee and a wordly person. Examine yourself! Are you a devotee or a sansarin? Understand your true identity in this Lila Darpan! Govind Hari!

Yamuna² is in spate. Will it test Vasudev? No, never! Yamuna knows that one who is resolutely established in Krishna needs no more tests. He will see Krishna in the examiner and in all the trying circumstances. It is impossible and unnecessary to test him. Yamuna only wants to get the pleasure of touching the feet of Lord Krishna seated in the

1. Birthday of Lord Krishna.

2. Yamuna river, through which Vasudev had to wade to reach Gokul.

basket over Vasudev's head.

The circumstances and even nature doesn't test a devotee but pay salutations to him. That is why Lord says: A devotee is superior even to God! Pure feelings and emotions are the real progenitor of both God and devotee. Inculcate true Godly feelings. Creating Krishna through this womb of noble emotions and sentiments, establish Him in this temple of your body! Celebrate Janmashtami!

Vasudev has reached Gokul. Yashoda¹ has given birth to Yogmaya. Whole of Gokul is asleep. Nobody has any inkling of the happenings. When the Lord appeared in the prison, the sensuous guards slept. When Yogmaya appeared in Gokul, all its inhabitants, the true devotees, went into a deep sleep. Where Lord appears, the sensualists sleep and devotees are awake, and where Yogmaya appears, devotees sleep and the sensuous world is awake.

Ya Nisha Sarvabhutanam Tasyam Jagarti Sanyami

Yasyam Jagrati Bhutani Sa Nisha Pashyato Muneh²

All the inhabitants of Gokul—the animals, birds and human beings, all of them—are true devotees, and are therefore asleep. Vasudev would also have slept but little Kanhaiya lying in the basket over his head prevents him from falling asleep. Vasudev places little Kanhaiya besides Yashoda, takes away Yogmaya and immediately starts back towards Mathura. As soon as he keeps the basket containing Yogmaya on his head, Vasudev starts becoming conscious of the world. He is worried about Devaki. The fear of Kansa returns and he starts walking briskly. He even forgets to talk to Nandbaba. As long as little Kanhaiya was on his head, he was immersed in an ocean of bliss, and thus could not sleep. Now Yogmaya is resting over his head, he is perturbed by the wordly worries. Not to speak of sleeping, he is not even able to rest a while. He is running. Oh! the perpetuator of this lila, salutations to thee!

Soon after little Kanhaiya is placed besides sleeping Yashoda, both Nandbaba and Yashoda have sweet, pleasant, divine dreams and get up. An ocean of bliss engulfs them as they be-

1. Wife of Nand

2. या निशा सर्वभूतानां तस्यां जागर्ति संयमी ।

यस्यां जाग्रति भूतानि सा निशा पश्यतो मुनेः ॥

hold little Krishna. In fact, before awakening his devotees, little Kanhaiya appears before them in dreams so as to motivate them to see Him. A true devotee is one who has the glimpse of Lord both in dream and waking states. There is bliss all around. Trees and plants are laden with fruits and flowers of varied hues. The mellifluous chirping of birds makes the environment even more divine. Even celestial singers and musicians would be put to shame, so melodious is the chirping of birds. Cows and calves have uprooted the pegs. The ropes tying them have broken. All are dancing in frenzy. What to talk of cows, even calves are secreting milk out of divine love. When even calves give out milk from their udders, know that place to be the abode of the Lord. . . The cowherds are running to meet Yashoda. Somebody has told them in dreams, "I have come to Yashoda's place". They are running Nand is astonished. Who told them that little Kanhaiya has appeared in my home? I haven't informed anybody till now. How did they all know?

On the other side of Yamuna, Vasudev, running fast, enters the prison of Kansa. The guards are still asleep. As soon as he enters his cell, the gates automatically close. Chains and fetters rush to cling to his hands and feet. Vasudev is once again imprisoned. Yogmaya wakes up the guards by alluring them with gifts in their dreams. . . . Yogmaya has come and the sensuous world is awake! Tired Vasudev, rests his back on the prison wall and falls asleep. Yogmaya has come and devotees are drowsy. Sinful and sensuous people are awake. . . The guards run. Inform Kansa. Devaki's eighth issue is born. The sensuous Kansa, gets up hurriedly and runs towards the prison to destroy his would-be destroyer.

Oh mind! Peep into this Lila Darpan! When the thought of Krishna was placed in the basket of intellect, this prison of world vanished automatically. The chains and fetters of desires, sensuous pleasures, ignorance etc. were broken, the gates opened. Vasudev (the Jiva) was liberated from the prison and enjoyed the ocean of bliss. But when Yogmaya was on his head, he was once again caught in the prison. The moment thought of Krishna is replaced by Yogmaya of worldly thought, you are again a prisoner in the confines of desires, attachments and false egos. As long as Krishna was atop the head of Vasudev, he was in bliss. As soon as Yogmaya replaced Krishna, he was worried,

frightened and weary. Krishna frees us from sorrow, misery and fear and bestows divine bliss and freedom, while worldly pre-occupations (Maya) usher forth fear, sorrow, worry, hatred, avarice, lust, anger, suffocation and bondage. Oh! Jiva! even then you are running after the Maya of the world. When you are so blind even towards your own good, then of what benefit can you be to them for whom you are toiling. You are only collecting sorrow in the hope of happiness, pain in the hope of bliss, bondage in the hope of freedom and death in the hope of life for yourself and your kith and kin. The stupid who does not realise what is good for his ownself and keeps himself in the fool's paradise of toiling for the welfare of his near and dear ones, is he not more likely to cause greivous harm to them like a blind leading the blind!

*Avidyayamantare vartamanah swayamdheerah panditam
manyamanah
Dandramyamana paryanti mudah andhenaiv neeyamana
yathandhah¹*

Enshrine the thought of Krishna in your mind and attain eternal bliss! Govind Hari!

Kansa heard Devaki's eighth child is born. He ran to prison and snatched the child from Devaki. Vasudev and Devaki closed their eyes out of fear and hatred. On seeing that the eighth child was not a boy, he burst into a peal of laughter. This little girl would kill me! He lifted the girl to smash her against the rock, but she slipped out of his hand. Yogmaya kicked Kansa and established itself in the space. She called out to Kansa, "You sinner! your destroyer has already appeared. Eleven years hence you will be done to death by him!" Saying this, she disappeared. Kansa, completely shaken and disappointed, kept wringing his hands.

Do you see! Kansa got kicks from Yogmaya. He could not do her any harm. And in spite of this (depiction), we, like Kansa, coming under the sway of Yogmaya (worldly desires etc.) are destroying the precious moments of our life. Blinded in the vain hope of helping the near and dear ones, one who confines truth (Vasudev) and justice (Devaki) in the prison of falsehood and kills

1. अविद्यायामन्तरे वर्तमानाः स्वयं धीराः पण्डितम्मन्यमानाः ।

दन्द्रम्यमाणा परियन्ति मूढा अन्धेनैव नीयमाना यथान्धाः ॥

(Kathopanishad)

their child—the righteous decision—he is continuously kicked by the Yogmaya, is disgraced and disreputed, and finally destroyed by his own inner self, the atman (Krishna) just like sinful Kansa.

Maya is always kicking you, alas, if only you were cognizant. Gripped in the maya of house, the householder is kicked from all sides. Who is happy today? Every household is an abode of sorrow. Why? Because Maya is kicking householders at every level of wordly existence. Whenever you look for happiness, you end up in misery. Maya is trying to wake you, through its kicks, to the reality that happiness is not in the world where you are seeking it frantically, but in that Lord, of whom even she is a bond slave. "I always punish the Kansa caught in sensory delights but shower abundant love on the inhabitants of Nand's village. Only he escapes my dragnet, who firmly seats my Lord in his mind. Such a person is bestowed with motherly affection, happiness and divine enjoyment by me. One who is loved by my Lord, him I love even more and I ensure that all his needs are happily provided. One who becomes a Kansa, going against my Lord, him I serve with kicks!" You kick-enjoyer, Maya's football, pray to Lord Gopal! Govind Hari!

The Lord incarnates himself to bless the matrimony of Devaki and Vasudev, but the pleasure of His Lila is enjoyed by Nand and Yashoda—what is the significance of this?

Vasudev in sanskrit means sun, surya which also represents Atman. Devaki means, the divine fire (Brahman jwala). Thus Vasudev symbolises Atman and Devaki symbolises the divine fire. The mind given to wordly delights is symbolised by Kansa. When such a mind goes astray in the world, then this body becomes a veritable prison for the Atman (Vasudev) and the divine fire (Devaki).

Now think carefully! Can you construct even a part of your toe from a heap of food. No! Then how and when did you "father" your child? Even today, as ever, the Atman (Vasudev) and the divine fire (Devaki) permeate every atom of the cosmos and give birth to every child of living beings. Only after the child is born, does the Jiva, like Nand and Yashoda, have the pleasure of bringing it up. Only he is worthy of being called Nand who

gives Ananda¹ (bliss) to everybody. Comes Nand and ushers forth Ananda (bliss)! Again, Yashoda means one who bestows glory. She, who gives glory and respect to all and through noble conduct and spiritual knowledge brings up the child into a glorious person—only she would be a Yashoda!

Oh Gopal! You are showing me my own image in this lila darpan. You have created this world of lila, these mysterious divine plays, only to illustrate the way of truth to this egocentric man. I could not make even a morsel of food from any amount of ashes. It is only you, who transform the ashes of an old man's body into beautiful flowers and delicious fruits through the Yajna done in the womb of trees and plants; and then again transform these fruits through the receptacles of various living beings into their progeny. Yet, this conceited, blinded, vainglorious Jiva believes, "These are my children. I am feeding them. This is mine. That is not mine". Unable to extricate himself from these untruths, lost in these sinful beliefs, following the footsteps of Kansa, he destroys his life. The truth slips away from him, and one who has given up truth, how can he attain you, Lord! Oh Lord of all sacrifices! Permeating every being, enacting the lila every moment, you are appearing within the confines of this body through the union of Vasudev and Devaki. How can a wicked mind (Kansa) recognise you? Blessed are those couples who like Nand and Yashoda enjoy the bliss of your lila in the whole universe. Even Vedas sing the glories of your divine play:

Akhshito'ti sanedimam vajamindrah sahastrinam
yasmin vishwani paunsya²

(Rigveda 1/5/9)

Like a pearl trapped inside the oyster oh my prana! I behold you. Just as a brilliant pearl is hidden in the shell, the eye is hidden behind closed eyelids, so are you hidden as the Atman inside all insentient and sentient beings. Oh Prana! you resplendent pearl! I now behold you in every living body (the shell), and what do you do there? In the divine fire (Atma jwala) you perform the supreme yajna which enables this ephemeral world to transform inert matter to living beings. The ashes transform into fruit and

1. आनन्द (आ + नन्द)

2. अक्षितोतिः सनेदिमं वाजमिन्द्रः सहस्रिणम्

यस्मिन् विश्वानि पौंस्या । (ऋग्वेद १/५/९)

fruit into multifarious living beings! This is the lila of Vasudev and Devaki! Omniscient! Omnipresent! Govind Hari!

When Kansa heard that his destroyer is being brought up happily in Gokul, he was extremely dejected. Kansa has two wives, 'Asti' and 'Prapti'¹. They both devotedly serve their husband. Both are sisters and daughters of the demon Jarasandha². All the chieftains of Kansa are mortally afraid of the enormous powers of Jarasandha, his father-in-law. No body dares confront Kansa. The same Kansa is sad and frightened today. He does not dare to lead the army to Gokul and confront his would be destroyer, the little Krishna. 'Asti' and 'Prapti' console their husband. Krishna would not be able to do any harm to you.

The delusory attachments and the petty possessiveness is verily the Kansa. One who has eliminated these from his life, has killed the Kansa. Only that Jiva can kill Kansa who has with unswerving devotion enshrined Krishna forever in the 'basket' of his head—the intellect. 'Asti' means 'to be, to have' and 'Prapti' means 'to get.' The Jiva who is caught in the bondages of desires and attachments—I must have this, I must get that—is a slave of 'Asti' and 'Prapti' and thus a devotee of Kansa. His prayer and ritualistic worship is only a self deception. The Kansa and his wives delude him and he becomes an enemy of Krishna, his own innerself, the Atman. He (Jiva) has then to present himself before Jarasandha. Jarasandha is the father of 'Asti' and 'Prapti', and the father-in-law of Kansa. Jara means 'old age' and also to 'wither', 'to be weakened'. Sandha means joints. Thus 'Jarasandha' means the 'old age which breaks the joints of the body'. First of all Kansa binds, makes one self-conceited, thereafter 'Asti' and 'Prapti' enslave him. They make him dance to their tune like a monkey and enjoy at his cost. The Jiva becomes a toy for amusement of Kansa and his wives; avarice and possessiveness start 'eating' him up. Jealousy, hatred, malice, disease, fear, disgust, worldly desires; all become agents of 'Jarasandha' and conspire against him. The body starts withering, joints start giving way. Life veritably becomes a hospital.

1. अस्ति, प्राप्ति

2. जरासन्ध

'Jarasandha' smiles. My daughters and the son-in-law have given me a new plaything for my amusement. How much they care for me. How nice of my daughters and their husband! They never forget me. Daily they send new toys for my enjoyment. Let me break the joints of these 'toys'. When they cry and writhe in pain, it will give me immense pleasure. Jarasandha is breaking your joints and you have come to celebrate 'Janmashtami'? Alas! If only you had become Krishna! How could 'Jarasandha' harm you then? When Jarasandha is fed up with a 'toy' he presents it to his very dear friend, 'Kalyavan'¹ and says, 'dear friend, I have broken their joints. Though in human forms, they are worse than worms. I am sending them for your enjoyment!'

'Kala' in sanskrit means 'time', 'Yava' means 'seed' and 'na' means 'not'. Thus 'Kalyavan' literally means and signifies "the time which brings all the achievements of the Jiva to naught" Broken by 'Jarasandha' are you not completely annihilated at the funeral pyre by this 'Kalyavan'? Oh foe of Krishna! Will you ever recognise these terrible enemies in whose lap you are playing today, and for whose sake you have become the bane of this earth. Oh! House 'holder', slave of its every brick. Tread the path of Lord. Had you only seen carefully your own good, you would have sung the glories of Gopal! You would have entrenched your mind not with fleeting sensuous delights but with ever blissful Krishna. Kansa, his wives and Jarasandha could never touch you.

Oh Lord! The abode of all the lilas! You manifested yourself only to protect this sinful Jiva, and keeping yourself free from all these 'demons' showed me the path of delivery from them. In your divine love for me, oh Gopal! You incarnated on earth and yet, sinful that I am, abandoning you I kept on searching my good in the company of Kansa. You still kept on awakening me, educating me about the truth, through your lilas. Sometimes you assumed the form of Vishnu and sometimes that of Rama. In every age I kept on blundering and everytime you appeared to redeem me! Oh Lord! My humble salutations! prostrations!!

1. कालयवन = [काल (समय) + यव (बीज) + न (नहीं)]

CHAPTER 2

Bal-Lilas in Gokul

It is bliss sublime in the village of Nand Baba. Nandbaba has got the child in advanced age. Maharaj Dashrath had also begotten Lord Ramchandra as his son at very advanced age. Why does Lord give filial enjoyment in advanced age?

According to Vedas, there are four different stages in human life. First, from childhood to adolescence, second from adolescence to youth, third from youth to adulthood (middle age) and the fourth from adulthood to oldage. The first stage is the period of acquiring knowledge. Then Jiva is, for the first time, made aware of knowledge. Knowledge is received but not put in practice, as one is still immature. In the second stage, to practise what he has learnt, the Jiva adopts the life of a householder (Grihastha)¹ and maintains a family in a manner akin to that in which the Lord maintains the universe. But still this is only a rehearsal. In the third stage, that desire to serve the humanity at large—nay all living beings—becomes intensified. Previously he was maintaining a single family, now knowing all insentient and sentient beings to be his family, he is engrossed in the service of the Lord which is seated in them. He is serving the Lord but yet is unable to know his own true identity in clear perspective. In the fourth stage feeling the presence of Lord everywhere, seeing Him in his ownself too, the Jiva enters into deep meditation. Seeing Narayana in the cosmos and experiencing the presence of Narayana along with the cosmos in his own self, when he is fully absorbed in Him, then Mahavishnu appears in the form of a little child. Such a fourth stage is very, very rare. The Jiva is not bound by time, such a “fourth stage” can be attained at any stage for it is more a matter of

1. गृहस्थ

feelings and emotions than of number of years. Thus when Jiva attains such bliss, then Mahavishnu (Narayan) appears as his son and gives him the pleasure of enjoying His divine play—the Lila—and thus multiplies his bliss. Nandbaba has also got little Kanhaiya as his son. Even Lord Shiva is eager to have His glimpse. Nandbaba is making everyone happy. He is generously distributing clothes, ornaments, food and cows to his subjects. Yashoda is virtually throwing away ornaments to all and sundry One who gives happiness to others is the angel (Devata¹) and who plunders others is the devil (Pishacha²). Lord appears only amidst angels. Angels freely disburse happiness to all. Nand and Yashoda are distributing alms. Kansa is a devil (Pishacha) by nature. Nand is an angel by nature. Angels go into ecstatic bliss on beholding the Lord! The devils are engulfed with fear, jealousy, malice and hatred. . . . If you are pleased on seeing others prosper, you are verily an angel. If, you are filled with jealousy and illwill on seeing others happy and prosperous, you are verily a devil. Observe yourself closely! . . . Nand is filled with Ananda³ (bliss) and Kansa is frightened and restless!

Today Kansa is dejected, frightened! His wives are also agitated. If the would be destroyer of Kansa is not finished in childhood itself, then the absolute monarchy of Kansa would be destroyed. With the death of Kansa, 'Asti' and 'Prapti' would be widowed and their happy life disrupted. Though they are encouraging and consoling their sorrowful husband, they are themselves frightened. Kansa is mortally afraid. He doesn't even have the courage to attack Gokul and kill the newborn child. Why not get the child killed deceptively? . . . Kansa remembered Pootna⁴ and the she-demon immediately appeared before him. Kansa ordered her to kill little Kanhaiya, by feeding him with poisoned milk. The giantess assumed the form of a beautiful woman, poisoned her breast milk and rushed towards Gokul.

Pretending to be joyous and exuberant, Pootna came near little Kanhaiya and started suckling him. Nobody had any misgiving. The little Kanhaiya caught her breast tightly and started sucking her milk. The poison didn't affect him. Instead, he started crushing the giantess with his mouth. Pootna was in

great pain and became restless. She struggled hard to free herself from the grip of little Kanhaiya, but he didn't relent. Assuming giant proportions she started flying, but little Kanhaiya kept on sucking life out of her till she succumbed and fell down on earth. The Gopis (cowherd girls) who were by now running after little Krishna separated him from dead Pootna and took him to Gokul.

The word 'poot'¹ in Sanskrit means 'pure' and 'na' means 'not'. Thus Pootna symbolises unholiness, impurity. Oh abode of all lilas! I am clearly seeing my impure character (the Pootna) in this lila darpan. Unholiness is verily the Pootna for it poisons our holy, godward feelings and leads us astray in this vast jungle of the world. Everytime I vow to tread your path, Lord! every time your sweet face begins to imprint on my mind, the numerous Pootnas in the form of sensuous delights, worldly pleasures and attachments obscure your lovely figure with their poison and push me again into this vast inhospitable world.

Should Pootna live or Krishna? Think, my sensuous mind! Both cannot coexist. One of them has to die. Pure, holy godly thoughts or sensuous impure thoughts of blinding worldly attachments!

The Unholiness of thoughts is verily the Pootna. Kansa binds jiva through Pootna. By finishing the holy thoughts (Krishna) and replacing these by unholy thoughts and conduct (Pootna), Kansa attempts to nip our godward feelings in the bud. Beware of Pootna!

Through these divine lilas even illiterate rustic villagers have attained salvation. The literates, alas, have today become the storehouse of the filth of the world. How can the children of Pootna (unholiness) know Gopal? Everywhere it is Pootna and Pootna alone. From birth till death, the worldly man seems to be lost in devotion of Pootna. What a great pity that Pootna has become the very animator of our society!

There was a time when true religion (spirituality) controlled and modulated the society, its political set up and education. The society was alive and agog with devotion to Lord. Came independence, and we thought it better to divorce spirituality from education and politics. The result—spreading of Pootna cult. The gloom of unholiness has enveloped the society since the bliss-

radiating sun of religion is no longer available. The politics has degraded to moral depravity and character assassination, socialism has become societal fleecing and education is reduced to profanity and crass materialism. We now call 'darkness' (ignorance) as light and naturally mistake fireflies for the 'sun'! the glaring radiance of sun (knowledge, truth) is intolerable to us now and therefore we keep it at more than arm's length! Hail Pootna!! If we understand the difference between modern education and pristine education, this concept of Pootna comes out in clear perspective. In that hoary past the child got admission into a gurukul¹ (residential school) at the age of eleven. Till then his education was the responsibility of parents and respected religious teachers living in society. Through rahasya-lilas the young children and their parents educated themselves about the essential duties and the very purpose of life. They tried to 'know themselves' to develop discriminative faculty to enable them to tell poison from nectar.

The very first lila they learnt was that of the temple. Today, you do not know the Rahasya-Lila behind the concept of temple, and so the temple is no longer an important part of your life, as it used to be. The children were taken to a temple, along with the parents by the religious teacher of the family in order to illustrate to them their true identity and to teach them practical religion. The child was explained:

The temple is a replication of your own reality. Just as you sit in a cross-legged posture during meditation, the temple is also built in that shape. The platform of the temple resembles your legs (in that meditative posture), the circular hall of the temple is like the trunk, the temple dome replicates the head, the spire over the dome is similar to the plait over your head, the idol is akin to the atman residing in you and finally you, the jiva, are the priest in this temple of your body. Your dharma² (duties, mode of conduct) towards this temple (your body) and towards Krishna (your atman) residing in this temple is quite akin to that of the priest of that temple. Just as the priest shouldn't defile the temple by his bad and immoral conduct, so should you desecrate this sanctum-sanctorum—your own body wherein resides the 'living' Krishna—by impure thoughts and conduct?

Just as the priest is not the owner of the temple, but only a

1. गुरुकुल 2. धर्म

trustee—for its owner is the consecrated idol—similarly this body is not your property, its true owner is the Lord—the atman residing within. As Jiva—just like the priest—you can, and should, use this body, but don't be mistaken into believing that you are its proprietor; for think, can you on your own even fabricate a small toe of your body! Don't therefore let this holy temple be desecrated by sensuality! Don't become your own Pootna, for that is the most terrible sin!!

When you are a trustee even of this body, how can you be the "owner" of the house, the shop, the business? Don't deceive yourself. Learn to live like a trustee in this world. Give up this petty possessiveness. The Lord is everywhere. Learn to live like a trustee dedicated to the service of the Omnipresent Lord. One who is caught in petty-possessiveness is verily caught by Kansa, 'Asti' and 'Prapti' plunder him; Jarasandha breaks his joints and finally Kalyavan swallows him. Carefully identify yourself, your duties and your dharma through this study of the temple.

Just as the priest makes an offering of the food to the idol, similarly didn't you also only make an offering to Krishna—your own atman—residing within you everytime you ate. It was He, who through the divine yajna¹ transmuted the food into blood and flesh. Therefore, should you offer that, which can not be offered to the idol in a temple, to the 'animate' Lord dwelling within you! Then how can you justify the consumption of tobacco, meat, wine, opium and other narcotics! No wonder, one who offers these things to the Lord within, is cursed by him.

Would you like to eat rotten jaggery (Gur)² after having tasted an excellent sweetmeat? One who has tasted the ecstatic delight of Lord's beatitude would never run after wordly titilations. The drunkards do not know the thrill of Gopal Ras³! One who knows Krishna, is lost in him. He has only one intoxicant—the exhilarating beauty of the Lord.

Can a priest sell the ornaments of the idol? Supposing a priest does so, for his own 'enjoyment', would you approve of it? Would it not be a grave sin? Similarly, your sensory organs are verily the ornaments of the atman—Krishna. Would you mortgage these for mere titilations? Use your senses in obedience to the dictates of your indweller—the atman.

Lord Shri Rama had joyfully accepted the ber¹ (jujube) offered to him by Shabri even though she had herself tasted them before. But isn't this story repeated in your own body too? Omnipresent Rama—the atman—is accepting the food defiled by you and cheerfully converting it into your blood, flesh and bones. Does this atman—the Rama—discriminate? One, who following the dharma of atman loves all creation without any discrimination, can truly claim to be a religious person—the Dharmatma.² Love all creation. Those who discriminate are verily going against the Lord.

He who becomes the atman and transmutes ashes and dust into delicious and nutritious fruits, who manifests all creation by binding Himself in all beings; who is bestowing energy, vigour, breath and pulsation in the body by becoming its obedient, honest servant—the atman, on such a munificent Lord, meditate with devotion. Then ask yourself: Lord has himself become a selfless servant of all beings. Through selfless services he is giving us this body and becoming its atman. He continues to serve it. Does he demand anything in return? Any fees, any remuneration for the priceless service rendered? Through selfless service He is embellishing us, feeding us, for what purpose? For the service of living beings or for plundering them for the sake of a few kith and kin comprising the family! Think carefully!!

An old incident comes to my mind. During a discourse, a well built Sethji³ (businessman) suddenly stood up, and protested: "Swamiji, whatever you say is unpragmatic. This philosophy is not for Kaliyuga⁴. In Kaliyuga, only prayer and worship are needed. I pray and worship the Lord daily, recite His name and tell the beads Why should this not be enough?"

This Sanyasin⁵ (monk) replied, "Sethji, suppose somebody recites your name thousand times a day, eulogises and worships you, but surreptitiously bashes up your grandson, tears away the clothes of your daughters and tries to molest them; how many boons would you grant him for the eulogies sung in your honour? He is certainly reciting your name and dutifully telling the beads of the rosary!"

1. बेर 2. धर्मात्मा 3. सेठजी 4. कलियुग
5. सन्यासी

Sethji, "Boons! Swamiji, what are you talking? I am not blind. I would get him imprisoned. Let anybody even try to cast an evil glance on my daughters!" This Sanyasin then replied, "Then kindly think! Do you feel, you can blind Him, who is giving "eyes" to all beings, by your rosary? Sethiji, if one's action and conduct belie the rosary, his prayer and worship are not accepted by the Lord!"

The teachers, in that hoary past, used to question young students, "Whose are these hands?" Children would reply, "His, who has made them!" Teacher, "Lord has made your hands! Beware! Let the Lord's hands be used, like the Lord Himself, only for the service of all." Govind Hari!

The true picture of a temple has been presented before you in brief. This pertains to that golden age when parents wished that their child be a true Dharmatma, a devotee of the Lord, the protector and humble servant of all living beings, nay, a veritable God on earth.

Today, honestly ask yourself. Do you send your child to school for educating him about this Dharma? What is the objective of modern education? Isn't it this: my child should get a good job after this education—a fat salary and a fatter bribe! Answer to yourself! Do you aspire to make a Krishna out of your son or a Kansa? Today, on this auspicious Ashtami, your son is silently asking you, "Mother! What do you want me to be?" Reply! Reply to yourself in silence. Would you like to be a Pootna or a Yashoda? Behold the innocent child! At the cross-roads of life, he is today seeking direction from you, "Mother! tell me! do you want me to be a Krishna or a Kansa? Should I call my mother Yashoda or Pootna? What are you, mother?" Little Kanhaiya is enquiring. Reply to yourself in silent meditation. Don't deceive yourself, at least today Oh Gopal! What have You wrought! Education itself has become the Pootna! The mother now wishes to make her child a social plunderer. A corrupt Kansa. Saints have become unacceptable, untouchables! Eyes are pining to see a Yashoda! Oh Lord! my eyes are dripping on witnessing the falling castles of this greatest culture of the world. Lord! that culture which professed and proclaimed Your presence in all living beings, which made selfless service its divine song, which motivated and encouraged such a way of living, would such a culture be

annihilated by Pootna. What a great fall! All around we see only Pootnas. Young innocent children are frightened. Lord! Today is your Janmashtami! Reveal yourself, Lord! Save us! Mercy on us!! Save us!

My beloved devotee! Behold yourself in this Lila Darpan. A long foreign dominion of over two millenia ended in 1947. Independence came. This culture survived onslaughts for over two thousand years. How? Because education and society was obedient to the religion, the Dharma. That's why your culture was not annihilated. But Alas! after independence we seem to be disintegrating very fast. The alien influences are eating into the vitals of our culture and we are forbidden to invoke our universal religion. The greatest tragedy is that we in India seem to be aping only the bad and undesirable aspects of foreign cultures while western thinkers are now appreciating the significance of the universal religion preached by our sages of the yore. The only way to arrest this rapid ruin of culture is to inculcate the values advocated by our religion—and this is possible only if education is once again brought within the diocese of true religion. Infusion of values and building the character is definitely possible, but only if children are exposed to such thoughts at a young age. Unless we realise the importance of this fact, don't you also agree, dear devotees, that we are the only dying race of the world!

The race which couldn't be suppressed by thousands of years of servitude, should that be exterminated after independence! What a great paradox! Kansa seems to be winning all around. Everywhere Pootna is being hailed. Alas! if only religion had not been divorced from education and human values were ingrained right from childhood!

An event which occurred a few years ago has suddenly come alive. This sanyasin was on a pilgrimage to holy Badrinath shrine. In Rishikesh (on the way) I met an Irish doctor, about sixty five years old. He had started from his country with the solemn resolve of "meeting" Lord Badrish. His face was lit up with happiness as he learnt that he was nearing Badrinath. He zealously told me that his long cherished desire would now be fulfilled. He would go to Badrinath on foot. On his adult face, this childlike yearning and innocent desire had to be seen, to be believed. How happy he was! His shoes had got torn. He

walked barefoot. There were blisters on his feet, yet he travelled submerged in a sublime bliss—for he was going to ‘meet’ Lord Badrish. He had translated *Srimad Bhagwadgita* in Irish language and was distributing it free. Irish hymns in praise of Krishna were on his lips. The fair complexioned Irish man, with an untrammelled smile on his face, infecting the environment with enchanting happiness was advancing barefoot towards holy Badrinath!

A blissful excitement reflected on his face as he finally reached the shrine. He murmured to himself, “My long cherished desire is fulfilled today.” Tears suffused his eyes. He even took a bath in the ice-cold water of Alaknanda!

The same evening this Sanyasin noticed him on the bank of Alaknanda gazing into the blank sky above Brahmakapal¹. A sad, dejected, crestfallen face resembling a disfigured statue! I was taken aback, and asked, “Did you have the Darshan² of the Lord?”

He shook his head in the negative, but didn’t utter a word. He kept on staring blankly. After sometime he turned his head. Our eyes met. What pain was there in them! I was stunned. What had happened? Why was he so unhappy? I wasn’t able to muster enough courage to ask him. He then broke his silence himself, “This temple is of Lord Krishna?”

“Yes”

“That same Krishna, who has declared in Gita: Arjuna! He who offers me with devotion even a leaf or a flower, I accept that offering with the same devotion . . . The priests were asking me, would I like to perform puja³ (worship) of one hundred rupees or five hundred rupees? Oh Krishna! Am I still alive . . . ?”

His throat got choked due to emotions, and he turned his face towards the river. He was in tears, it was evident. The faith, feelings and emotions devotedly nourished by him over the years were dripping from his eyes!

I was dumbfounded, for I couldn’t tell him that numerous such ancient temples have been directly or indirectly nationalised and effectively reduced to ‘commercial establishments’. Crores of rupees of offerings made annually at such venerated

temples like Tirupati, Balaji, Badrinath and Kedarnath are being used by their managing committees not for furtherance and sustenance of the religion and culture but for improving roads and opening new colleges; as if the tax collected from the masses for this purpose was not enough. Think, dear devotees. Had this money been used for propagation of the religion, for example, through publication of inexpensive spiritual literature, would you have been so ignorant of your own cultural and spiritual heritage? . . . I don't wish to criticize this 'take-over' of our temples. My only humble submission is: let the money collected from religious institutions be used only for religious purposes. And of course, Sanyasins like me do feel pained to witness public auction of the offerings made to Gopalji!

During my stay at Badrinath I was a witness to many other strange happenings A cow climbed up the stairs to confront Lord Badrish. For a few moments it gazed at the Lord and then went back to Brahmakapal. It stood there, facing Alaknanda, at the same spot where the dejected Irish doctor had sat, and then suddenly jumped into the river Oh Krishna! are we really alive? Gopal, I can't bear the agony of that Irishman. I also, like that cow, feel like getting lost in the waves of Alaknanda! I am not able even to preserve the faith of an avowed devotee! In the teeth of vested interests, Sanyasins like me do not 'interfere' with the management of these temples. And what do these religious institutions do to nurture the feelings of true devotees? Tell me frankly, dear devotees, how many times have you heard protests against the systematic vilification of religious teachers, saints and Sanyasins in novels, stories and even films! Both in fiction and in films, don't you find unabashed denigration of ochre robes! The sanyasins are always the villains of the piece! Assuredly, such depictions do not foster devotion in the credulous masses who are eager to smell a scandal in everything religious! And with modern education being what it is, why should it surprise you, dear devotees, if the society is disintegrating due to moral turpitude?

Till the time education was within our control, the society was self integrating. Even a large family of hundred people had a common kitchen. Today when education is "free", every family is disintegrating. There are lines drawn between father and son! A family is the smallest unit, the building block of the

society. When this fundamental unit is breaking down, is it not pure hypocrisy to talk of organising the society without bothering about the damned education system which only promotes alienation and separation. When families are breaking down, to talk of organising religion, culture and the country! what a chimera! And to top it all, you wish people to believe that there is nothing wrong with our educational system and that religion is the main culprit for all social maladies!

Kindly judge dispassionately! If every brick wishes to run away from the other brick, along with 'its' mortar, what would happen to the ceiling of such a building? How long can the roof be supported on crutches and stakes of delusion and deception! Family is like the brick of our social fabric. Today, these bricks are not just tearing apart but falling to pieces. When these bricks are crumbling, the canopy of religion and culture is sure to come down tumbling. Humanity is bound to get crushed to untimely death, and in those ruins, only owls, vultures and falcons can roam freely! Are we not a dying culture?

. . . . The offerings of temples are meant for promotion and propagation of religion and culture, for protection of hapless animals and birds, and serving the poor and disabled people. A temple is a religious trust. To use its money for other purposes (howsoever noble!) is and should remain to be a culpable offence, as is true of all other trusts. But alas! where is the courage and strength of character to point this out?

Kindly do not misunderstand the feelings of this Sanyasin. I am not against any religious organisation, any leader or any religion. It is only a matter of principles and fair play. This sanyasin appeals to all of you, to rise above narrow sectarian and personal considerations and make a fair judgement yourself. Like Kansa, believing the truth (Vasudev) and justice (Devaki) to be against your narrow ends, do not attempt to kill, in its infancy, your own fair decision (Krishna!). This will be a grave sin. Please discuss this proposition freely and intensely in society, in legislative assemblies, in parliament, in judiciary . . . everywhere and wherever it matters; and thus resuscitate this dying culture! You would be doing a great service, a truly virtuous deed.

It is our duty to stop this continual erosion of faith of

numerous devotees like that Irish doctor. There was a time when animals used to get fodder and greens from temples. Now, hungry cows have to silently drown themselves in the bosom of Alaknanda! The perishables offered in the temple—the food stuff, fruits etc.—rot, but are not available for cows. The managing committees feel it more desirable, whenever possible, to auction them. Hungry cows keep on dying! Even God is now a prisoner in the temples! Alas! If only we could enforce justice.

If we wish to protect this canopy of society, culture and religion, then we must prevent the disintegration of its supporting bricks. And this is possible only through suitable religious education and ensuring proper functioning of temples. Education has to be freed from clutches of Pootna and entrusted to Yashoda. The nation can also be strengthened only through a purposeful education system giving due importance to inculcation of right values. That's why we sanyasins do not come together for politicking but prefer to spread the knowledge of true Dharma which could act as glue in rejoining these drifting bricks—the disintegrating families. We are all one, and have only one Dharma—the service of all living beings! All rights are with you. We are like the stones lying on the road side, we serve even on being kicked. This is our nature, our Dharma! . . .

Would Pootna win or little Kanhaiya? Kansa wishes that Pootna should live. All devotees pray that little Krishna should live. Kansa loses. The devotees win. Pootna attains salvation through the hands of little Kanhaiya.

When Pootna's brother Shakatasur¹ learns that the little child has killed his sister, he goes to Gokul to take revenge. Nand Baba and Yashoda are busy. They have kept little Kanhaiya below the Shakat² and are attending to other chores. Stealthily, Shakatasur appears on the shakat. Little Kanhaiya smells his nefarious designs and kicks the shakat. The shakat turns turtle and Shakatasur is crushed to death underneath.

Casting the Lord aside and attempting to fill the shakat of this life, is verily the Shakatasur tendency. Our whole life is

1. शकटामुर

2. शकट

actually spent in the service of Shakatasur. It is this Shakatasur tendency of pillaging society and the world to fill our individual shakats which is really responsible for decadence and disintegration of this great culture. One who with narrow mindedness tries to fill his shakat, has to receive the kicks of the Lord and his shakat turns turtle.

The Lord does not prevent you from filling your shakat. Only seat Him in it, don't cast Him aside. . . that is to say, believe that this shakat belongs to the Lord, for this is the truth. We are only trustees. Lord! the whole universe belongs to you, and this shakat of my life, is for the service of the world. Let us feel so, and act accordingly. Let us not become Shakatasur. Realising that He is in all living beings, let us use this life of ours—this filled shakat—for His service. Govind Hari!!

Kansa sends for Trinavarta¹. He orders him to kill the young child. Trinavarta arrives in Gokul, and keeps flying in the air till he spots little Kanhaiya. Nandbaba is fast asleep. Yashoda is busy in domestic jobs. Little Kanhaiya is all alone and unattentive. Trinavarta lifts him up and assuming the form of a tornado flies higher and higher. He wishes to lift little Kanhaiya high enough to smash him on rocks. . . Trinavarta has lifted little Kanhaiya. The Lord notices that mother Yashoda, Nandbaba and all his friends—the cowherd boys and girls—are running helter-skelter, fear writ large on their face. He starts increasing His body weight. The weight is increasing continuously. Trinavarta, finding it too heavy, is getting crushed under it. The Lord keeps on increasing His weight till Trinavarta is crushed to death. The wicked Kansa is again defeated! Hail little Kanhaiya!!

In Sanskrit, Trina² means straw, and 'Avarta'³ means a tornado! Thus the word 'Trinavarta' means that tornado which can lift and fly off with even heavy objects as if they were straw. In the story too, Trinavarta assumes the form of a tornado. Behold your true self in this Lila Darpan, Oh innocent devotee!

Who is the friend of sensuous Kansa? Our mind, blinded by

1. तृणावर्त

2. तृण (तिनका)

3. आवर्त (बवण्डर)

delusory attachments. The fury, anger and excitement which makes this jiva—already led astray by desires, greed and wordly attachments—a victim of tempestuous circumstances is indeed the Trinavarta. It is this Trinavarta, which creates typhoons of worries to destroy the solemn Godward resolves and thrusts the Jiva in the path of sin. Unless you finish this Trinavarta in your thoughts, your solemn-resolves of devotion to the Lord can never be free from fear.

But alas, Trinavarta has become the very basis of our existence! In society, in education, in politics, in fact everywhere, Trinavarta is deeply entrenched. Its fierce dusty winds obscure the vision of our well meaning social reformers. They mistake the shadow for reality and attempt to eradicate the trees—the social maladies—by striking at their shadows, their manifestations. The maladies keep on blossoming and flourishing. Spreading their tentacles all around, these maladies cripple the society. The new ‘pits’ formed due to attempts at striking the shadow, only add to the misery. The maladies remain intact, and due to our naive attempts at their solution, the society shrouds itself with some new dogmas, new sins and new deceptions. If only the leaders of our society had delved deep into this Trinavarta Lila of Lord! Govind Hari!!

Trinavarta can be destroyed only by a man of resolute understanding. Trinavarta will whisk away all your virtues and make you a blot on society. Neither do we live in peace nor let others live! Today our great race is lacerated by this Trinavarta. Everybody is dancing to its tune. The roaring laughter of wicked Kansa can be heard all around. Mother earth is sad! There was a time when it felt blessed at the sight of divine sport of Krishna. Today, it is tormented and frightened by the devilish orgies of Trinavarta, Pootna and Kansa. Life has become like a cancerous wound, paining, rotting and crying every moment! There is no respite but at the funeral pyre. Oh man! Is this the ‘blessed’ human birth for which even angels aspire! My dear devotees! Today make the solemn resolve to kill the Trinavarta flourishing in you and in your families. May your life be blessed!

By now, the real import of divine Lilas of little Krishna must be becoming clear to you. The parents of that era used to embody this knowledge of divine lilas and used it to make the lives of their children purposeful. It will not be possible to expound all the lilas in detail—so I would tell you in brief

their secret significance. Numerous demons (Vatsasur, Bakasur, Dhenakasur, etc.)¹ sent by Kansa to Gokul and Vrindavan are done to death by Lord Krishna and Balrama. . . Vatsasur, means the blinding attachments of the Jiva! The feeling of 'mine' and 'thine'! Bakasur means deception, trickstry, fraud, arrogance, hypocrisy. So long as Bakasur is not eliminated from the life of a child, he cannot be a blessing to society. He would only become a curse, a blot on humanity.

Unfortunately, Vatsasur and Bakasur have become an integral part of our lives. In that golden age, the parents and teachers educated and encouraged the children to nip these demonic tendencies in the bud and thus motivated each child to be a Krishna. These Lilas formed the strong, dependable roots of the tree of his life. As long as these roots were not attacked, the race and our culture did not perish, inspite of centuries of subjugation. With the destruction of this 'school' of Lilas, we have become rootless and no amount of nurturing and loving care of the branches and leaves of this tree can save it from disintegration. Still the tree is not fully destroyed, it can be revived; if only we have the courage to take the bull by the horns!

The Lila of destruction of Aghasur²! "Agha" means ignorance, darkness, sin. The educational system which cannot completely finish this Aghasur from the lives of children, how can that ever be a benefaction. Without destroying Aghasur, disintegration of society cannot be prevented. By killing Aghasur the Lord, actually reveals to us the key to a happy life.

Dhenakasur³ means to carry knowledge and worldliness like the load on a mule without imbibing it in the life. Dhenakasur used to roam about assuming the form of a donkey. Isn't this donkey an apt symbol for the 'modern' education? All we want is to memorise the books and load ourselves with the degrees. Where is the inclination to ingest it in the life?

Once a psychologist called on me. She had done a doctorate in child psychology: thesis title—child care. She taught this subject in the University and had written a research monograph

1. वत्सासुर, बकासुर, धेनकासुर

2. अघासुर

3. धेनकासुर

on the topic. I learnt later that she had only one son, whom she often beat so much that he would faint! She is a child psychologist, has lots of degrees and research publications to her credit. Probably, she might even be honoured by the President for her 'work', and be invited to deliver talks abroad! Dhenakasur, Hats off to you!

By establishing its suzerainty over our daily lives, Dhenakasur has transformed man into a money-laden animal. Lord Brahma¹ created numerous birds and animals. Now even Brahmaji is amazed. "From where has this new species of 'money-animal'² emerged. I didn't create it. Has some new Brahma (creator) manifested himself!"

Lalaji³ has amassed a fortune. He is a multi-millionaire. But doctor has prescribed his diet. "Sethji, you suffer from diabetes and hypertension. Don't take anything sweet. A little boiled vegetables and two loaves of bread. An injection at dawn, another at the dusk and a dozen multicoloured capsules during the day!" Please judge for yourself, should this be the culmination of your efforts at amassing wealth. Our Lalaji is not able to eat anything himself and therefore doesn't allow anybody to eat. A perfect dog in the manger! Dhenakasur also neither allowed the children to eat fruit nor he ate it himself. Sri Balrama, by killing him has given us divine counsel to eliminate Dhenakasur propensities from our own lives, from the lives of our children and of the society at large. If only we could give up becoming Dhenakasur and instead become truly human!

Then, there is the Lila of killing of Pralambasur⁴. Pralambasur symbolises parasitism. We must be self-reliant. We must bank on the indwelling Krishna-our Atman-and not on our bank balance, property, houses or progeny! Pralambasur is capable of annihilating our society, our culture, indeed the complete humanity. . . That's why the Lord kills him too.

There was a time, centuries ago, when a young child having been educated at home through these Lilas would enter

1. ब्रह्मा

2. धनपशु (in Hindi)

3. लाला जी

4. प्रलम्बासुर

Gurukul¹ in his eleventh year, having already learnt the art of controlling his mind—the sensuous Kansa! This was the effect of Krishna Lila which was meant to motivate every child to be Krishna, for the Lord had also killed Kansa soon after completing ten years. The education of the Gurukul soaked them in divinity. Today, thanks to cinema and TV, they learn about immorality, violence, murder and rape! They used to see Lilas then, and they see Lilas now too; only the content has changed. Then they were motivated to be Krishna, today they find thrill in Kansa! If these cinema and TV are put to constructive use, man can become an angel on earth, and this earth could become a paradise. The society, its leaders and even reformers blame us, see muck and filth in Lilas. . . Govind Hari!

It was a different era, when childhood was soaked in the nectar of Lilas. A king had everything—dedicated armies, prosperity, power, all amenities for pleasure and enjoyment, but when time came, he renounced everything, became a Vana-prastha², and passed rest of his life in a small hut. Today, you are unable to leave even a brick! There is litigation, even violence between father and son over the house. Reason? In that era you eliminated Pralambasur from your life, today you are his bonded slave. How dare the slave go against the master!

This Sanyasin had once gone to see a Swamiji. Found him sitting morose. Enquired: “What happened? Why are you so gloomy, not keeping well?”. The Swamiji replied, “Had purchased a costly TV. This stupid disciple dropped it and broke it to pieces”. I replied, “Swami, TV Lalji, any other problem besides this?” Swamiji asked angrily, “Why do you call me TV Lal?” I replied, “You told me that the TV is broken, but you seem to be much more broken; then how are you much different from that TV?” Hail Pralambasur, the Great deliverer!

In Sanatan Ashram many ladies came in their cars. Their children were being carried by maid-servants. Modern dress and ornamentation made them appear more western than Indian. They requested me, “Swamiji, kindly give us a discourse on Bhagwatam³”. This Sanyasin replied, “Bhagwatam is not for

1. गुरुकुल

2. वानप्रस्थ

3. भागवतम्

you". "Why?" they enquired. "In Bhagwatam, you would find that illiterate ludicrous Gopis (cowherd girls) saw Krishna in somebody else's child, and you need a maid servant to carry your own child! How is Bhagwatam relevant to you?" The purpose of the epic is that we should "see" little Kanhaiya in our own child, enjoy his service and Lilas every moment, motivate him to kill the 'demonic' propensities, and make him an angel! Only Parikshit¹ listens to Bhagwatam. Scholars, arrogant and greedy people do not really listen to it, even though the discourse vibrates their ear drums. Why? Their mind is absorbed in sensuous thoughts and this impairs their receptivity. And if anyhow they are able to receive anything, their vanity creates tremendous contradictions. Caviling obscures the nectar of Lila from them and they only see the defects. Such people really deserve our pity.

A scholar once questioned, "Sanatan Swami, Bhagwatam says that Dhundhkari² became a Preta³. Can you prove it?" I asked, "Should I show you one, how would you recognise him?" He replied, "Preta has feet in opposite direction—the heels in front and the toes behind."

This Sanyasin replied, "Well, then I can show you witches and Pretas for the asking! We were supposed to go Godward, but are running towards the sensuous world, doesn't it amount to 'heels in front and toes behind'? Tell me, how many Pretas you wish to see!". The scholar went away angrily. God knows why!

Little Krishna, born in Mathura, is brought to Gokul. 'Pootna', 'Shakatasur' and 'Trinavarta' Lilas take place in Gokul. Thereafter, Nandbaba takes little Kanhaiya to Vrindavan. 'Aghasur', 'Bakasur', 'Vatsasur', 'Dhenakasur', 'Pralambasur' and other Lilas occur in Vrindavan. Raas-Lilas also occur in Vrindavan. What is the secret behind it? . . .

Little Kanhaiya goes to graze the cattle along with other cowherd boys. On seeing Krishna, the Gopis and even cows forget their children and run after him. They neglect their children. Lord is unhappy, he does not like this. He enacts another Lila. Even Lord Brahma is bewildered due to his Maya. A

1. परीक्षित

2. धुन्धकारी

3. प्रेत

doubt arises in Brahmaji's mind, "Is Krishna really the Creator Himself?" To remove his doubt and to test Krishna, he kidnaps all the children and the calves. "Let me see, what Krishna would do now? The cows will search for their calves and the Gopis cry for their children, surely, they would ask Krishna. Then let me see, what Krishna would do?"

Krishna kept on observing this play silently, with amusement. Brahmaji returns to Brahmalo¹ (his heavenly abode) along with the kidnapped children and calves. There he sits for meditation and goes into a deep trance. The children and the calves remain there for one year!

Meanwhile, Lord Krishna has manifested himself in the form of "calves" and "cowherd boys." As dusk approaches, the "calves" and "cowherd boys", return as usual. No body has even an inkling of what transpired. Everybody is happy. Little do they know that it is the same Gopal, their little Kanhaiya, who has assumed the form of their children. And now, they love "their children" as much as they love little Kanhaiya.

After a year, Brahmaji arises from his trance. On realising that a year has elapsed he rushes to Vrindavan. To his amazement, everything is normal there. The cows are enjoying with their "calves" and the "cowherd boys" are playing with Kanhaiya. Brahmaji realises his mistake and begs forgiveness. He frees the calves and cowherd boys and returns. The children tell their parents about their long secret journey. Unable to believe it, they ask Krishna. Lord confirms. Brahma had done so at my behest and it was I who was appearing in all these different forms before you!

"Lord! Why did you do so?" the innocent Gopis enquire. "All of you loved only me. You were mad after me and neglected your children over and over again. I didn't relish this. I am present in all! Knowing so, he who continually serves all living beings, is verily serving me; he is the true devotee. It was only to remove your ignorance that I created a doubt in the mind of Brahmaji. Go and serve your family, your husband, your children—for I am residing in all! In cows and calves, in children and in adults, in all living beings . . . know me to be there. Knowing thus, love all. With such thoughts in your mind, serve

1. ब्रह्मलोक

all living beings. It was to explain this secret that I arranged this Lila.” Lord Krishna gives them the secret nectar of life!

The cowherd boys have often to go to far off places in search of pastures. At “Kali-Dah”¹ there lives a fearsome cobra, “KaliyaNag”². It poisons the water, eats up the calves and even kills the cows.... Where cows are butchered know that to be the abode of ‘Kaliya Nag’. Those who are eating the calves and justifying it, know them to be the ‘Kaliya Nag’... What is this ‘Kaliya-Nag’? Understand this mysterious Lila of the Lord. He, who tames his ten senses—this ten hooded serpent—only he can ‘know’ the Lord! These senses are thus the ‘Kaliya-Nag’ which entraps us in the clutches of Death (the Kal)³ and separates us from the deathless Krishna. Therefore, dear devotees, hurry, tame this ‘Kaliya-Nag’, today itself!

Only he can tame this ten hooded serpent, who has already removed ‘Pootna’ and other demonic tendencies from his life. Lord is explaining, through His Lilas, our path and the goal. Dear Devotees! How much love does “Gopal” shower on us! He is illuminating our path through the beacon light of his Lilas. Let us all resolve to bring this ‘Kaliya Nag’ under our control. Let us exterminate all the ‘demons’ from our thoughts, make our senses the ‘Gokul’, the thoughts ‘Vrindavan’ and the body, ‘Mathura’. And then, on the banks of ‘Yamuna’, let us joyfully meditate on the Lord. May God bless you all!

In that epoch, people made their lives truly blessed through this Lila. These Lilas made their lives meaningful. The society educated through these Lilas was bound to be cohesive, self-sustaining, happy and contented. The globe was a paradise. The only “things” deficient were the sorrows! Every moment was full of joy, full of bliss!

Today, education motivates us to prey on society for the sake of our family! A respectable job, fat salary, high perks and even higher bribe! This is the cherished objective!

When this is the be-end and be-all of education, please think, can anybody be happy? Can such a country remain integrated? “Whether I am a doctor or a major in army, police officer or a scientist, judge or an engineer. Please tell, why did you educate me?” asks every conscientious youngman today. “Only for the

1. काली-दाह 2. कालिया-नाग 3. काल

narrow gains of a small set of people—‘my family’? . . . Then why do you make anti-corruption departments? Have you not been educating and preparing me only for corruption right from childhood? Be honest, and give up hypocrisy! Do you really expect me to honestly guard your frontiers! Why shouldn’t I take money from the smuggler and make my family happy—for this was the sole purpose of my education and training? Today, if I am still honest, if I still have some affection and devotion for my culture and my country—in spite of the education received by me—it is only because of the traditionally pious and religious environment of my family . . . What will happen to future generations?” Think of these pure innocent faces, and tell the truth!

Dear devotees! the knowledge of these divine Lilas of the Lord was an ambrosia for every tier of society. The Lilas of eleven years of Krishna’s childhood sweetened the entire childhood of the young ones. For a Vanaprastha, these lilas were a reminder that he had to exterminate all these demons within eleven years, and make the twelfth year of his life resplendent with Krishna so that taking recourse to solitude (Agyatvas,¹ literally—living in oblivion) in the thirteenth year and purifying himself completely, he could embrace Sanyasa. This is also the significance of the banishment of the Pandavas². Without exile (living in solitude of a forest) it is impossible to win against Kauravas. Only then would the study of Gita be fruitful. We shall expound this in future. . . .

‘Go’,³ in Sanskrit means, ‘light, cow, planets etc. and senses’. ‘Kul’³ means ‘the clan’. First install Lord in the clan (‘kul’) of senses (‘go’), i.e. in Gokul, otherwise you will not get any joy in Vrindavan. When Gopal is firmly seated in the senses, and they function fully subservient to him, then only come to Vrindavan.

In Sanskrit, the word ‘vrind’ means “an ensemble, a collection” and ‘van’ means ‘forest’. Vrindavan⁴ thus represents the collection of thoughts, and the significance of destruction of demons ‘Aghasur’,

1. अज्ञातवास

2. पाण्डव,

3. (गो + कुल = गोकुल)

4. वृन्दावन = वन्द + वन

'Bakasur', 'Vatsasur', 'Dhenakasur' in Vrindavan unfolds automatically. To be happy, blessed and eternally peaceful impregnate your life with this nectar of Krishna Lila!

When the senses become 'Gokul' and the thoughts, 'Vrindavan', then proceed to 'Mathura' to demolish Kansa.

In Sanskrit, 'Math'¹ means 'to churn' and 'ura'¹ means, 'the vast expanse of heart'. Kill the Kansa—the sensuous mind and arrive at the bank of Yamuna! Yamuna² (= Yam + na) i.e. where there is no ('na') death ('yam'), How can there be any death near Yamuna, for Lord Krishna resides there! Govind Hari!!

Having killed Kansa, offer the throne (of your body) to Ugrasena (the austerities). Free Vasudev (the knowledge of the atman, the self) and Devaki (the vow to live in tune with dictates of the atman) from the confinement. Make self-realisation the only goal of your life and to equip yourself to achieve it, go to a holy teacher—the Sandipani Rishi (to whose Gurukul Krishna went after killing Kansa). Educate yourself about the secrets of the divine Lila, and on completing education, enthrone Krishna—the ever present atman—in your heart, the 'Mathura'. Divinity is your birthright—strive to truly deserve it! May you be eternally blissful!

Vedas warn us: the moments of your life are slipping away! You can't get them back. You have the option of rotting them in sensuality, hatred, avarice, covetousness and other vanities or of enjoying them by living life like a sacrifice in utter devotion to the Lord and His creation which abounds on this earth.

Vedas define God (Ishwara)³ as one who confers glory and grandeur on others; one who not only animates the beings, but also makes their life glorious. One who sacrifices himself for the sake of others is God—the Ishwara. One, who robs others' fortune and builds a golden castle—the Lanka, is Ravana, the demon.

Similar is the secret significance of Raslilas⁴ and Maharaas⁴ . . . every Gopi (cowherd girl) feels the presence of Krishna in her Gop (cowherd boy) and is dancing in ecstasy! The precious

1. मथुरा = मथ + उरा

2. यमुना = यम (death) + ना (No)

3. ईश्वर = जो दूसरों को ऐश्वर्य दे !

4. रासलीला, महारास

moments of life which were being squandered in bickerings, discontentment and malice are now transformed, with this new feeling, into coveted moments of bliss and contentment. The marital life of 'Gops' and 'Gopis' has become divine and blessed with the sentiments of Radha-Krishna. Life has become full of joy, blessed and divine . . . if only you had also drunk this nectar of Lilas!!

These Lilas improved society by purifying it at the level of its fundamental unit—the family. By presenting the Vedic knowledge and essence of spirituality in a simple, enjoyable and practical manner, these Lilas swept aside all the pricks from their lives. In every house there was an incarnation of Lord! This Krishna Lila is in fact the story of elevating man to Godhood!

Consider the much maligned Lila of 'Cheer-Haran'¹. In fact, this Lila has been added later to the Krishna Lilas. It is an artistic explanation of a vedic aphorism which got transformed into a Lila with passage of time. The 'Gopis' are standing naked before 'Krishna' i.e. the 'Jiva' is naked before the Atman—his inner self. With clothes, only the outer-surface of the body can be covered. How would you cover yourself from Him who is seated inside? . . . and if fusion with Atman has to occur, then surely all worldly inhibitions and facades have to be cast aside!

Do not deceive yourself! At least within yourself, accept the naked truth in totality. Do not mask it with drapes of 'circumstances', 'needs of time', 'situations' and 'pragmatism'! Govind Hari!!

All the 'Ras Lilas' of Lord Krishna occur during his childhood. On his eleventh birthday, Kansa sent for him. Promising to return soon, Krishna proceeds to Mathura, leaving Gokul and Vrindavan restless . . . and he never returned! After killing Kansa, he freed Vasudev, Devaki and Ugrasena from prison and installed Ugrasena—Kansa's father—as the king. Thereafter, young Krishna went to the hermitage of sage Sandipani . . . In those days, a child went to 'Gurukul' in his eleventh year . . . There, Kanhaiya be-friended Sudama. When he returned after completing his studies, King Ugrasena abdicated in

1. चौरहरण (literally, the legendary episode involving stealing of clothes of Gopis by Krishna)

his favour. At the age of twenty five Krishna became the king of Mathura. His divine grace embellished the throne of Mathura. He remained the king of Mathura till the age of fifty, and then left Mathura and established the city of Dwarika. Till the age of fifty, Krishna was a celibate. In his fifty first year he had to marry Rukmani—on her solemn entreaties—to prevent her from passing into the hands of demon, Shishupala. So pious was his character! It was at the time of his marriage that Lord Krishna came to Vrindavan to fetch Nandbaba, Yashoda and his other friends to Dwarika. Gopalji desired that his marriage should be in their presence.

Those who are totally unaware of his pious life, see 'filth' in his 'Lilas'. Everything looks yellow to the jaundiced eye! The filth is in their eyes and they denounce the Lilas. Such socialites really deserve pity. Would an ascetic like Shukadev¹ have recited the story of an ordinary mortal and emperor Parikhshit² opted to listen to it for self realisation when his death was imminent? . . . When little Krishna was three years old, Radhaji had come as a bride to Gokul. The pure love of a child towards an affectionate lady is immortalised by the divine Radha-Krishna Lilas In the unsullied sport of a divine manifestation they smell eroticism, but they feel no shame or even embarrassment in seeing obscene films along with their young daughters and daughters-in-law. You can also meet ladies, befooled by these socialites, who take pride in maligning Krishna-Lila in all conceivable ways. There is filth in the innocent sport of a child but their unabashed wanderings with these socialites—casting their own husbands aside—are pious and divine! Of course, the cake is taken by those "intellectuals" who, like morons, listen to their 'arguments' but do not take any unequivocal decision themselves. And, after delivering a long sermon, when the socialites flee with their wives (for social service!), our 'intellectuals' are often found wailing at street corners! They might not have understood Krishna-Lila, but (hopefully) this Lila is then no longer beyond their comprehension! Govind Hari!!

Ras Lila is the nectar of our life. The benediction for aus-

1. शुकदेव

2. परीक्षित

terities, and a simple straightforward maxim for self-realisation. Kanhaiya is doing 'Raas' with every 'Gopi' . . . Now, recall, Kanhaiya is the Atman, present in all beings and all Jivas are the Gopis. Narayana manifesting Himself as the Atman of all beings is performing His divine 'Raas' simultaneously in the bodies of all creatures, every moment—if only we open our eyes to it. By choosing to inhabit this inert matter, our body, as its Atman, He animates it, just as he energises the wooden flute by blowing wind through it! It is because of Him that this Jiva—the Gopi—feels happy, is alive, begets knowledge and discrimination; and the day He chooses to leave the body, Kalyavan will devour it on the funeral pyre! These subtle secrets of Rāslila bring home to us in a simple and dramatic manner the very purpose of our existence, the mysteries of creation and evolution and illustrate simple and practical way to self-realisation. These have been bequeathed to us by Bhagwan Ved-Vyasa—the same great sage who compiled the revered Vedas. To believe that these Lilas are untrue and vulgar but Vedas are sacrosanct and true! Doesn't it sound paradoxical to you, dear devotees—unless you believe Ved-Vyasa was schizophrenic! If Gopalji wishes, this Sanyasin will explain to you some day, how Vedas too sing the glory of Lord as 'hidden in all beings'¹, and the Ras Lilas are only graphic descriptions of the Vedic aphorisms. Govind Hari!!

1. सरूप कृतनो मृतये . . . (Rigveda)

CHAPTER 3

Makhan Lila

We are still in Vrindavan. Gopal goes, along with his friends, to graze the cattle. He is barefooted. Nandbaba brings slippers for him. Gopal refuses to use them. Says little Kanhaiya: All my friends are barefooted, then how can I wear the shoes? The poor cowherd boys can not afford stitched clothes, and therefore, Kanhaiya doesn't wear the clothes which Nandbaba had fondly purchased for him from Mathura. 'What my friends cannot put on, I shall also not wear'. Nandbaba is grieved. But what can he do? Kansa keeps on increasing taxes. Even if the calves starve to death, heaps of butter must reach him as tax. Without paying him tax, it is impossible to live within his kingdom. Poor cowherds are unable to spare milk or butter for their children. If the tax doesn't reach Kansa in time he will torment all of them. The poor Gopis have to keep milk and butter away from the eyes of their children!

On realising the plight of his people, little Kanhaiya is infuriated. He announces to his playmates, "No tax will be sent hereafter to feed Kansa and his wicked soldiers." How would a little child manage this revolt?

Krishna said, "The calves have the foremost right to milk, and then come we, the children. We will make an 'army' of children. Every child will search out, where mother conceals the butter. We will then steal it and eat it all together. When there will be no butter, how would Nandbaba give it to Kansa? We will not tolerate injustice to calves. If they are not given their due share of milk, we will surreptitiously untie their ropes and let them drink the milk. Agreed!"

All cowherd boys shouted their consent with full-throated cries: Hail Little Kanhaiya!

The consequences of this secret decision are too well known

to be elaborated. The cowherds protest to Nandbaba about the 'misdeeds' of Krishna and his 'army'; but Krishna does not relent. Ultimately, even Nandbaba lays his arms down before the obstinate children led by his beloved Kanhaiya. But, like others, he too is afraid, for now he is unable to send any 'tax revenue' to Kansa. But he recalls . . . even Brahmaji had tried to test little Kanhaiya, and failed . . . Indra had also to bow down before him at Goverdhana. We must respect and obey what Kanhaiya desires! . . .

Kansa is also cognizant that his enemy is not an ordinary mortal. The whole Yadava clan is flamed with the idea of revolt. Following the footsteps of Nandbaba, all the other chieftains have also stopped paying tax to Kansa. Kansa realises: It is no longer possible to crush this impending revolt by an open declaration of war. Why not call Krishna and Balrama to Mathura and get them murdered! I must send such a messenger who arouses no suspicion . . . and must send him with generous presents, gems and jewellery, so that nobody doubts my intentions . . . Thinking so, he chalked out a plan. A Yajna¹ (a religious sacrifice) was arranged by Kansa. He sent Akrurji to 'honourably' fetch Shri Krishna and Balrama for participation in the 'Yajna'; and advised him to take a cartload of gifts for Nandbaba—clothes, gems, jewels and all! Akrurji is an intimate friend and a distant relative of Nand. Kansa kept Akrurji in the dark about his real intentions. Akrurji is a pious, holy man of noble character. He is innocent, but not a fool. He also smells a rat in this move. To obey his king, is his duty, but so is it to obey his conscience! In the two days available to him before his departure from Mathura, he sends his trustworthy messengers to all Yadava and other chieftains under Kansa who are angry with him and immensely love Krishna. Akrurji senses that this Yajna is being planned by Kansa only for the purpose of killing Krishna and Balrama. . . . a wicked person loses his discriminative faculty, while a pious person uses it to get out of really complex situations! . . . Fully assured that he has taken all possible steps against the evil designs of Kansa, Akrurji starts for Vrindavan to meet his beloved Govinda.

The golden chariot of Akrurji has stopped at the gates of

Nandbaba's residence. He alights from the chariot. Nandbaba comes running to meet him. He is immensely pleased to see Akrurji. They embrace each other. Tears of ecstatic joy fill their eyes. Who can imagine their blissful state!

Nandbaba conducts Akrurji to his residence. On beholding Krishna, Akrurji goes into a trance. Without even batting an eyelid, he gazes fixedly at the majestic beauty of the Lord! An incessant stream of tears flows down his eyes. He loses the consciousness of time. Holding the hands of young Krishna in his hands, he is lost in his own dream world! It is virtually impossible to describe that scene. Govind Hari! Hari Om! Narayan Hari!!

Akrurji is lost in Krishna in the trance. Pearl-like droplets trickle down his beard drenched with tears. Falling on his silken robes, they disappear leaving their trail on the clothes. Gently, Gopalji, moves away from there. He knows that as long as he doesn't move away, Akrurji will not be able to be 'normal'.

Akrurji tells Nand the reason for his visit—to take Shri Krishna and Balrama for participation in Kansa's Yajna. Nandbaba is stunned. He stands aghast with fear for the safety of his children. Akrurji's probing eyes are able to understand his mental anguish. Lovingly, he keeps his hands on Nandbaba's shoulder and explains to him the whole riddle. Convinces him that the time for deliverance from wicked Kansa has come. . . Explains to Nandbaba in detail the plans of Kansa and also about the arrangements done by him to counter these plans, till Nandbaba is satisfied and nods his consent, even though he is still dumbfounded due to the shock of imminent separation from beloved Krishna!

On listening to this request, Yashodaji bursts into tears. This news—that Akrurji has come to take Krishna and Balrama to Mathura—spreads like wildfire in Vrindavan. The whole Vrindavan is sad. Radha faints on hearing this news. Oh Akrur, Why have you become so Krur¹ (cruel)!. . .

She (Radha) had come as a bride to the village. The three year old child (Krishna) had told her, "You are mine!" and then had tried to embrace her in his small arms. . . His innocent face, the hair bedecked with a peacock's feather, draped in a

yellow cloth, carrying a small flute in his tiny hands. . . Radha had drawn that innocent prince into her bosom and said, "Kanha! I am yours!"

"You would then play with me!"

"Yes!"

"Everyday!"

"Yes Kanha! Any moment!"

"When I play the flute, know then that I am eager to play.

Please do come, for I would become very sad otherwise!"

. . . saying so, he had left. Radha had kept on looking in the direction he had left. . .

The same dreamchild is going to the city of wicked Kansa. He has just completed ten years. How would this little innocent boy fare against wicked Kansa, his well fed wrestlers and huge army! The Gops and Gopis are restless. Even the cows refuse to eat fodder. Silently, they try to absorb their anguish. Those, who are unable to do so, burst into tears. "Gopal, please don't go! Don't leave us!" Their heart is wailing. "Kansa is indignant on not receiving the 'tax'. He is leading you into a trap, Krishna! Do not go!"

. . . The chariot has started moving. Shri Balrama and Lord Krishna console everybody, promising to return soon. Along with Nandbaba and Akrurji, they are aboard the chariot. Vrindavan is wailing. There is no wind, but the violent storm raging inside every inhabitant of Vrindavan, leaves them desolate. Gops and Gopis ask their children to run after the chariot, fully prepared. "Let no harm come to Kanhaiya!" They are explaining to their children. "Don't care even about your lives. If the wicked Kansa attempts to harm Kanhaiya, fight till death to protect him. Let no body be able to even touch Kanhaiya till you are alive!"

. . . Within moments, groups of young children are running towards Mathura. They do not wait for each other. Running they tell Kanhaiya: "We are coming behind you. Don't enter the city without us. Wait for us in the garden outside the city". Radhaji advises Gopis to sit and silently pray for their beloved Krishna. She assures them, "Our prayers and penances would destroy wicked Kansa. Our Kanhaiya would be unscathed"

They pray to Mother Yamuna. . . weep before Lord Shankara¹, prostrate before the idol of Jagadamba². . . Hail these blessed Gopis! Who can even imagine their pious emotions! Oh my mind! Kiss the holy dust of their feet!

. . . Mathura is overflowing with people. From all directions, groups of people are pouring in—in chariots, on horses and camels and even on foot! Kansa is amazed. He had not organised such a big Yajna, neither had he made arrangements for so many people. In fact, he had not sent special invitation to anybody—even his own father-in-law, Jarasandha had not been informed. Even then, groups of people were pouring in and spreading out in Mathura. Little did Kansa know that years of austerities and penances of imprisoned Vasudev, Devaki and his own father Ugrasena, were about to bear fruit!

A tremendous multitude is thronging the streets of Mathura. Kansa had planned to get Krishna crushed under the feet of a deranged elephant. Now, how would the elephant even get out of the palace? Kansa's spies inform him that the mob collecting ostensibly for observing his Yajna is actually composed of warriors. They are the soldiers, who have come in the guise of spectators along with the mutinous chieftains. Kansa was flabbergasted. Sweat sparkled on his angry forehead like glistening dew drops. He felt that the trap which he had dexterously laid for Krishna and Balrama was ensnaring him. The crowd was not of mere onlookers but the soldiers of revolting chieftains who had managed to enter the city in disguise without any fight! Kansa's palace, prison and court, all had been encircled by them. Nandbaba, Shri Krishna, Shri Balrama along with their friends are camping in a garden outside Mathura. All around this garden is a huge crowd of soldiers who have come to 'see' the Yajna. Kansa is afraid—not to speak of reaching there, he is not able to muster courage even to move freely in his own city!

After taking the permission of Nandbaba, Shri Balrama and Shri Krishna enter the city. The inhabitants of Mathura are extremely happy. They all have an inkling of coming events, but are mute. They are all tortured by Kansa. But fear of Kansa and Jarasandha has forced them to tolerate the torture. Since

King Ugrasena has been imprisoned, many citizens have taken to austerities giving up all comforts, of their own accord. Many of them are observing vows and fasts. They sleep on ground and have been voluntarily living austere lives for the sake of their pious king. Today, they are all jubilant. The roads are packed with mutinous soldiers of various chieftains. Kansa is virtually a captive in his own palace—caught like a rat in his own mousetrap. The populace is thrilled. Today, Krishna and Balrama will stroll freely in the city and Kansa would not be able to harm them. Kansa has also realised, the tables have been turned on him. There is no hope of any succour from Jarasandha; he can't even be informed of his plight. Even before Lord operates, Yogmaya spreads its net. Kansa is losing even without fight. Except a few sycophants, soldiers, and ministers, there is nobody in his kingdom to sympathise with him.

Lord Krishna and Shri Balrama have entered Mathura. The whole city reverberates with cries hailing them. Shopkeepers and general public are eagerly awaiting them on the streets. Fearlessly, they worship the two brothers as per their tradition and feel blessed. Ladies are showering flower petals. The citizens are honouring their pals—the cowherd boys—with clothes, ornaments and food. The groups of Gops are being garlanded at every corner. The informers of Kansa are continuously reporting. Kansa is frightened all the more. These deeds of his 'own subjects' torment him. The whole city is resounding with cries hailing Shri Krishna, Shri Balrama and Emperor Ugrasena! All this is too much for Kansa. He feels his head would explode. Like a tiger caught in a cage, he is pacing the floor of his palace, extremely frustrated, utterly helpless, totally desolate!

Let us abridge the story . . . A mad tusker is done to death by the Lord. Kansa's wellfed wrestlers are floored in wrestling bouts and ultimately Kansa is also killed by Shri Krishna. His wives 'Asti' and 'Prapti' are widowed. Lord frees king Ugrasena, Vasudev and Devaki from the prison. Those moments are extremely touching . . . it would be impossible to describe them in words. Ugrasena requests Vasudev to ascend to the throne of Mathura, but he politely declines. Ugrasena begs Vasudev to let him adopt Krishna as his successor. Vasudev agrees gladly. Ugrasena again becomes the king of Mathura and Shri Krishna is declared the crown Prince! The citizens of

Mathura are in supreme joy. They bedeck Mathura like a bride! Not just Mathura, in fact the whole kingdom is lit up with festivities. Vrindavan is in rapture. Everywhere sweets are being distributed. New temples and other places of service are being inaugurated. The roads are full of people dancing with joy. The day Kansa is killed by Shri Krishna, is also his eleventh birthday. The joys of people know no bounds!

Lord Shri Krishna is sent to the hermitage of venerated sage Sandipani. In those days the child entered Gurukul soon after completing ten years. This tradition is now more or less finished—its remnants can however still be found here and there. In Saurashtra it is still prevalent among the Kathis¹ who, in fact, are the direct descendants of Yadava clan.² The same tradition can also be seen in Russia—though in a modified fashion. There also, a child goes to school in his eleventh year. Till the age of eleven, the child is not bound in any way—he is left a free bird to pick and choose knowledge from nature, the family, the environment. Thereafter, he has to go to school and study there—away from his parents.

Soon after entering Gurukul the sacred thread ceremony (Yajnopavit)³ of the child was performed, and this was not done in the manner in which you do it at your homes now-a days. It is more than thousand years since the last Gurukul was destroyed and therefore, quite understandably, you take misconceptions as gospel truth. The dark clouds of servitude enveloped this culture, thousands of years ago. The Universities, religious books and libraries were razed. Saints, sages and teachers were massacred. Cities were destroyed and those who somehow managed to escape, hid themselves in dense forests to escape death and disgrace. Generations passed in this turmoil and thus the bright Sun of our great culture was shrouded by dark clouds of violence. How can modern “intellectuals” sitting in their comfortable air conditioned offices, discover these harsh truths, for their vision is totally coloured by their occidental education and values?

Thus, not only the education at Gurukul, but in fact, all types of education of the children were destroyed. It became extremely risky for young girls to go out of home. The tradition

1. काठी 2. यदुवंशी 3. यज्ञोपवीत

of Swayamvar¹ thus got slowly destroyed. Before this onslaught on our culture, girls were free to choose a proper spouse for themselves. In Swayamvar—as the very name signifies—the girl chose a life partner out of the invited eligible bachelors. But once the danger of abduction of girls loomed large on the society, this custom had to be given up and child marriages became prevalent. The child marriage was thus forced on the society due to pressure of circumstances, for to wait till the girl was mature enough for Swayamvar was fraught with great dangers. In this great Yajna of life, the two partners started meeting at night, to preclude risks of abduction during the day—and thus the tradition of conducting marriages during the night started.

In the Indian culture, marriage is a holy Yajna. Today, due to thousands of years of servitude we are totally oblivious of this fact. A man married a woman to shower happiness and honour on her and not to make her a bonded slave. I would portray that pristine concept before you in brief, by giving explanation of what a man says in front of the holy fire to his bride through the vedic aphorisms: “Oh Pious Lady! I invite you for matrimony. In reality, neither of us is the ‘husband’ or the ‘wife’, because, both of us are ignorant about the true cause of creation. The Atman and the Prakriti assuming the forms of ‘man’ and ‘woman’ are performing this Lila of creation of the entire universe. Let us rehearse that incontrovertible Truth. You adopt the role of wife,—The Jiva—and I, that of husband—the Atman. Let us bind ourselves in matrimony in the true holy spirit following the instructions laid down in scriptures. Just as the Lord—the Atman—takes the responsibility of protection and upbringing of the Jiva, so do I solemnly undertake to look after you. Please give your Gāndeev² (the sacred thread) to me, for it is now my duty to protect you.³ I will wage the war of life on your behalf too, and therefore, give your sacred thread to me and accept all my wealth and a place in the core of my heart. I promise that in this great battle of life,

1. स्वयंवर (स्वयं + वर)

2. गण्डीव (यज्ञोपवीत)

3. That’s why, at the time of marriage the sacred thread is doubled even now!

remaining in the front, I will always bear the brunt. However, in all my achievements—during worship, Yajna and even salvation—yours will be the first share.”

In no other civilization was woman accorded such a place of honour. The chains of slavery have deluded us. Once cut off from its mainstream of religion, the culture could never be revived in its pristine form. In fact, the self-styled ‘upholders’ of this culture have, under the garb of social reforms defiled it all the more and made it really loathsome. Alas! if only we had attempted to dig into the true font of this culture!

. . . The Yajnopavit (the sacred thread ceremony) used to be done in Gurukul. Whosoever came for education in Gurukul—be it a boy or a girl—had the right to Yajnopavit. During the long period of slavery, the movement of girls out of the home became difficult and therefore, their sacred thread was put on an idol of Goddess Durga. The tradition of putting this Yajnopavit on the husband, at the time of girl’s marriage is still in vogue.

Lord Krishna has come to Gurukul. He meets Sudama and other students in ‘school’. . . The source of all knowledge, the creator of all cosmos has come to gather knowledge in Gurukul! What a divine Lila! How blessed is Sandipani Rishi, not to speak of Krishna’s classmates! The plants and trees seem to have got a new brilliance, for the Lord will stay near them for quite some time. Every child stayed in Gurukul for about twelve years.

The Yajnopavit was the very first ceremony to be performed in Gurukul and its detailed significance is available in the book ‘Sanatan Darshan Ki Prishtha Bhoomi.’¹ Here, I will mention it briefly. The three threads of the Yajnopavit signify the essence of life and serve to illustrate its true purpose. Rigveda has sung its glory in extremely touching aphorisms:

Know the first Sutra² (thread) to signify that Sutra² (the maxim) through which the Atman—present in all beings—transforms dead matter—the ashes—into delicious fruits and vegetables. Therefore do thou ‘see’ and ‘feel’ the presence of Narayana in all plant life! Live for them, identify yourself with them and thus acquire the subtle knowledge of the process of

1. सनातन दर्शन की पृष्ठभूमि

2. सूत्र (in Hindi it means thread, as also a maxim)

creation. . . It is the duty of a Brahmacharin¹ to plant new trees and serve them with devotion just as a priest serves the idol in a temple. Knowing each plant and tree as a temple of the Lord, nourish them, protect them. Be a true devotee of all plant life!

The second Sutra is to know all living beings as the temple of the Lord, a place where the Yajna of 'creation' (transforming food material into blood and flesh) is being continually performed by the Lord Himself. Knowing thus, to worship all living being in the spirit of a priest. To serve them like the priest, without expecting anything in return. To love them and in the process acquire the secret knowledge of Brahman², the subtle secret of creation. . . Thus, the second objective of education was to learn this secret of second stage of evolution (The first stage being transformation of ashes into vegetation) and to accept this universe as the divine creation of the Lord! To be a devotee of the Lord, in the true sense of the term.

The third Sutra is to know our own body as a temple of Naryana—the Atman—and to live in it as a trustee, again like the priest of a temple. To realise our true inner self, to overcome this dualism of Jiva and Atman through Yoga³, to assimilate the knowledge of creation—which is continually taking place in the body, and thereby to overcome this cycle of transmigration and get merged in the infinite. If having somehow obtained a human birth, I am unable to realise this truth, then would I do so in an animal birth? If my education can't lift me up from the present status of a crippled beggar to that of the Creator Himself—in whose mould I am cast—then what is the purpose of such an education? . . . Everytime (in every birth) I collected the 'degrees', constructed houses and shops. . . with what conclusion? Everytime I finally slept on the funeral pyre! . . . And whenever and wherever I returned (was reborn), I was again like a decrepit beggar, hungry, naked, ignorant! All the knowledge collected earlier, all my material achievements had been reduced to ashes! I was again learning the alphabet! Had I been successful earlier, (in my previous births), then tell me, why should I be studying the same things again?

Unfortunately these maxims are lost in modern education,

1. ब्रह्मचारी 2. ब्रह्म 3. योग

and the only purpose of education is a good job, high salary, and even higher bribe! How would you appreciate my story, now?

The three sacred threads of Yajnopavit were not worn like a necklace, but kept over the shoulder, like a bow. Why? I will indicate here in brief (for details, please see 'Bhagwat Gita, Divya Darshan'¹). This collection (Arjan², in Sanskrit) of ten senses—the Jiva—is verily the Arjuna. The body is its chariot and the Atman—Krishna—is the charioteer. For, it is He who is imparting life—the breath, the pulsations of heart—to this chariot where the Jiva is seated. And it is this Yajnopavit which is the real Gandeev³ which helps us fight the Mahabharat⁴—the great war against the Maya. . . And so you wear this Yajnopavit like the Gandeev, the bow of Arjuna! Govind Hari!!

Lord Shri Krishna 'obtains' this divine knowledge in Gurukul. The Lilas of Gurukul are extremely interesting, thought provoking and educative. The telling of a lie by Sudama on being asked by Krishna about the handful of gram on a rainy night. Sudama's experience of 'Maya' while bathing in the river along with the Lord. . . all are marvellous expositions of subtle truths of our existence! Various types of knowledge—a clear understanding of their objectives, various principles—their detailed exposition, the secret of creation of this universe, the union of Jiva and Brahman, etc. . . such rare knowledge is acquired by Shri Krishna in the Gurukul and then he returns to Mathura.

. . . .Today, Mathura is decorated like a bride, for it is the coronation of Shri Krishna! The whole city is buoyant. People are giving away alms, decorating their houses, and there is joy, song and dance everywhere. Maharaj Ugrasena has retired to forests (Vanaprastha⁵) and handed over the throne to Lord Krishna. How great were those people! Today, for the sake of a few bricks you will chase away your father! The modern descendants of the great people of such a great culture, what a great fall! Where are we heading to? . . . Govind Hari!

1. भगवत् गीता दिव्यदर्शन 2. अर्जुन 3. गण्डीव
4. महाभारत 5. वानप्रस्थ

CHAPTER 4

Udhava Lila

Udhava is an intimate friend and adviser of Lord Krishna—the king of Mathura. He is a great scholar, extremely austere and highly sagacious. Shri Krishna gives utmost respect to him. Sri Balrama also helps his brother in discharging the stately obligations. Yet, Shri Krishna—the emperor of Mathura—is quite sad; often during lonely moments his eyes are filled with tears. This does not remain concealed from Udhava for long. Shri Krishna is not inclined to marry. He desires to live a celibate. Many a time his friends and other chieftains try to persuade him, but he doesn't agree—everytime he deftly evades such suggestions. Even though he is the king of Mathura, Lord chooses to live like an austere hermit. He is not even inclined to hunting. All his intimate friends are great scholars and sages. Amongst the advisers too, the majority is of such people. Saints, scholars, hermits are now frequently guests of honour in Mathura. Krishna spends most of his time in their service. However, in those few lonely moments amidst his stately obligations, he often plunges into melancholy and his eyes are filled with tears. This greatly upsets Udhavji and other friends of Shri Krishna. They make numerous attempts to enquire into the cause of this sadness, but are able to elicit only a blank smile which disarms them completely. The prosperity, comforts and pleasures of Mathura are unable to interest Shri Krishna. Throughout the day he is busy, but in the evenings and mornings, he looks quite dejected. He is extremely reticent, doesn't tell the reason to anyone. Once, finding him alone, Udhava resolutely confronts him:

“Krishna! Kindly tell me the reason of your unhappiness. I have often seen tears in your eyes. You will have to tell me the reason today!”

Krishna slowly opens up, “Udhava! What can I do! I am un-

able to forget Brij¹. Those pious Gops, Gopis! Completely unfettered environs! That pure unadulterated love! Those gentle currents of fragrant breeze, embracing and whispering through creepers and groves! The mellifluous sound of hoofs of cows returning from the pastures at dusk! The musical tinkling of their bells! And that symphonious chirping of the birds imparting unearthly tinge to that music! The groups of Gops and Gopis calling me aloud, Kanha!! Kanha!! Those guileless unfettered, pious pals, absolutely ignorant of lust, greed, desires and deceits! Udhava, again and again their faces come before me. On beholding me they smile for a moment and the very next moment become extremely sad. Unceasing streams of tears flow down their eyes. Suddenly I start hearing their whispering notes. "Kanhaiya! You had promised to come back soon. Have you forgotten us? We are still alive, for we believe you would come. You refuse, and we will immediately give up our bodies. We are unable to live without you, Gopal!"

Lord Krishna is unable to speak further, his throat is choked with emotions. An incessant stream of tears flows down his face. Udhava is dumbfounded. Unknowingly he has opened the flood gates! He had no inkling that such a tremendous spate was brimming!

After a pause, the Lord starts again, "Udhava! I am unable to forget Brij. When Radhaji had come to the village as a bride, I was just three years old. She has showered immense love on me. I have played in her lap. The most happy memories of my past are intertwined with her. In my absence life has become an intolerable burden for them. I am unable to forget those great pious ladies even for a moment, Udhava! My mind continuously wanders in the feet of holy Nandbaba and Yashoda, my mother! I do not relish the puddings of Mathura so much as I enjoyed the butter and Misri² (sugarcandy) in Gokul. I am unable to get that pure, unalloyed affection and kinship here!

Udhava couldn't resist himself, "Krishna! What are you talking! To destroy the precious moments of life in crass worldliness does not behove a great scholar and sage like you!"

Taken aback, the Lord enquired, "How do you say so, Udhava!" "Dear Krishna! You—an erudite scholar of scriptures, the Vedas

and Vedanta, the best student of that great sage, Sandipani—wailing over memories of the dead past, the memories of those ludicrous, illiterate Gopis! To remain perturbed, to destroy these precious moments of life in sorrow and anguish! Casting aside devotion to the supreme Lord and killing time in brooding over past does not behove you at all!” Udhava tried to explain to Krishna.

“Udhava! Your explanations seem to make sense. Please continue.”

“Krishna! This world is ephemeral, like a dream. The only truth in it is the Transcendental, Immortal Brahman¹. It imparts motion to all, but is Itself immovable. It is responsible for generation, operation and destruction of the whole cosmos. This transcendental Brahman is the lone energy in this world; everything, even time, is under Its control. It is this Brahman which becomes the Atman of all beings and imparts life and sentience to inert matter. It is the bestower of all accomplishments. This supreme Brahman is the essence of all life, and its realisation, the lone purpose of life. To meditate on this supreme Brahman, to observe penances for its realisation and to be devoted to it are the only duties of Man. Casting aside this supreme goal and meditating on those stupid illiterate Gopis, can never be justified, Dear Krishna!” Udhava explained further.

“Udhava! I very much appreciate your arguments, but alas, am unable to change the state of my mind. Udhava, I have become helpless before these innocent Gopis. If they stop thinking about me, give up their feelings and emotions towards me, only then can I recover and follow this path, so succinctly advocated by you. I not only feel, but am convinced that whatever you say, is the Truth, but Udhava, when these Gopis shed tears remembering me, I am unable to restrain myself. In spite of all my scholarship, my eyes get filled with tears and my heart is saddened—their devout feelings compel me!” The Lord expressed his helplessness in an innocent, unaffected manner before Udhava.

“Krishna, I must solve this problem of yours. Precious moments of life cannot be ruined in this manner”.

“My dear Udhava! Only you can do so. You are a great scholar, a sage, knower of the essence of Supreme Brahman.

1. ब्रह्म

Please go and advise Gopis to pray and meditate on Supreme Brahman. When they stop thinking about me and devote themselves to worship of Supreme Brahman, I will immediately recover from this melancholy and then devotedly follow the path advised by you!"

"Be it so Krishna! I will make a move today itself," announced Udhava.

"Udhava, please do keep in mind this special request of mine! I have been fondled by those pious Gopis. Nand and Yashoda are veritably my parents. I have always respected Radhaji. Kindly do not say or do any such thing which hurts them. Dear friend! Convey my obeisance to Nand and Yashoda and my salutations to Radhaji. I am ever so grateful to them. I have not been able to repay their debt of butter and candy with which they have fondly fed me!" Lord explains solemnly to Udhavaji.

"I will take care, Krishna".

"Udhava! Those Gopis are very shy. They do not talk to strangers. They will not talk to you, too. Take this yellow garment of mine. Keep it on your shoulder, only then would they talk to you."

"I will do so, Krishna, and I will also repay your debt!" Udhava loads the chariot with a variety of clothes and ornaments and proceeds towards Brij. Lord Krishna bids him goodbye. Even though he advises him against it, Udhava fills his chariot with jewels, ornaments and clothes—to repay the debt of butter and candy! Innocent, simple Udhavaji is proceeding towards Brij! Govind Hari!

Udhava has come to Brij. He is a bosom friend of Kanha and has Kanhaiya's yellow garment on his shoulder! This news attracts a huge crowd to Nandbaba's residence. Udhavaji comes out, along with Nand and Yashoda. He offers his salutations to all. Suddenly he casts a glance at a lean and thin, emaciated lady standing apart. An extremely effulgent face radiating holiness like the Sun! Udhavaji immediately guesses that she must be Radhaji. The brilliance of her face elicits respect from all and sundry, and unconsciously Udhavaji prostrates himself before her.

She makes enquiries about Lord from Udhavaji. Udhava tells her everything, especially about his melancholic disposition, and advises her to give up this feverish devotion to Krishna and instead meditate on Supreme Brahman.

Radha, then questions him, "Udhava! Where is the abode of this supreme Brahman?"

"The supreme Brahman is present in all beings. It is omnipresent!"

"Udhava! Does Supreme Brahman also reside in the body of the king of Mathura."

"Yes, of course! It is present in everybody—in you, in me, in all beings!"

"What? It resides even in these ludicrous, illiterate Gopis?"

"Yes, Radhaji. I have already mentioned. It permeates everything". Udhava confirms.

"Udhavaji! Tell me truthfully on an oath! Have you seen this Supreme Brahman in anybody? In us, you saw only stupid, illiterate Gopis. In Krishna, you saw only the King of Mathura. In whom did you see Supreme Brahman? We have been worshipping the Supreme Brahman in the king of Mathura. We have 'seen' Krishna in everything, everywhere! Oh Udhava! Had we been just the worshippers of king of Mathura and if our love was purely on a physical plane, then think, isn't Mathura only five miles from Vrindavan? Couldn't we go to see 'Him'? Everyday, these Gopis go to Mathura to sell milk, curd and butter, but they do not call on Krishna! Why? Because they are in a hurry to come back home. Little Kanhaiya is waiting there for them! Udhava! Is this not the worship of that Supreme Brahman? Please advise us! Tell us Udhava, have you ever conducted yourself with this feeling of omnipresence of Supreme Brahman? In whom have you seen It?"

Innocent, pious Udhava is stunned. His mind is tremendously agitated. "Oh Udhava! In whom have you 'seen' Supreme Brahman? What a stark Truth! You didn't realise it, Udhava!!" These voices reverbrate in Udhava's mind. He is beginning to grapple with himself through such tumultuous thoughts. "I never even had an inkling of this great truth! While I kept on announcing Its presence everywhere, I could not myself 'see' It anywhere! I saw everything else in everybody—never the Supreme Brahman! . . . Did I really have faith in It? Udhava, answer to yourself? You, the stockpile of all knowledge! While proclaiming the secrets of Brahman to the world, did you ever conduct yourself with this realisation? Oh divine Radha! Who are you? I did not get such a clear exposition of Truth even

through Vedas. . . and in a moment, you have placed the naked truth before me! Oh Angel! Who are you in reality? . . . Oh Udhava! If you understood that the Brahman resides in all beings, why didn't you behave accordingly?" . . . Udhavaji is dumbfounded. A stream of tears flows down his cheeks. . . . "What a great deception was I perpetrating on myself! Oh Holy Angel! Only on beholding you was I able to overcome this delusion. Today for the first time in my life, I am able to see that Supreme Brahman in you, in Krishna, in everybody! My repeated salutations to thee!!" Udhava's eyes are closed. He is sitting against a wall. Fierce storms of turbulent thoughts are raging within and churning all his accumulated knowledge and scholarship. Tears continue to wash his face!

Nandbaba says, "Udhava! I do not know this Supreme Brahman. But a few moments ago I saw little Kanhaiya feeding the cows. I requested: Dear, you must be tired. Take some rest. He did not heed and started massaging another cow." Yashoda says, "Udhava! He, who is before me every moment, is 'my' Supreme Brahman. Just now I have fed him fondly with the butter and candy which he likes so much. Come and see! He is sleeping there in the cradle!" The Gopis say that they often see him running after the cows. One Gopi complains that while she was coming, she saw Kanhaiya sitting on a tree, playing on his flute, and when she ran to catch him, he ran away and disappeared. She caught the trunk of that tree and wept bitterly.

Udhava! What is this Lila? Nand sees him serving the cows. The same Nandbaba comes to Mathura every month to remit the tax. He hands over the articles to the storekeeper and goes back. Doesn't even attempt to meet his son Krishna, the king of Mathura? Udhava feels that in every grain of soil of Vrindavan, the Supreme Brahman is smiling. He hears Radhaji say to him "Udhavaji! Why don't you dissolve yourself in that Supreme Brahman whom you want to acquire?"

What have you uttered, Radha! Udhava is completely shaken! He feels as if he has descended on some other celestial land. A dazzling light seems to surround him. Udhava feels that rays of light are emanating from his own body too, and amidst those brilliant beams of light, Udhava says to himself, "Why do you want to 'acquire' this brilliance Udhava! Where will you keep it? You too are ephemeral. Why don't you dissolve yourself in this

holy brilliance and merge with the Infinite!" "Oh Radha! What did you counsel? 'Why don't you dissolve yourself in that Supreme Brahman whom you want to acquire?' Oh Radha! I hail thee! In these hundreds of Gopis, I am today beholding only the divine couple of Krishna and yourself!!"

Udhava's state is really beyond description. He is completely lost in thought. Udhava feels reborn; the old Udhava is dead! He falls at the feet of Gopis. Innocent Gopis are frightened and look askance towards Radhaji, as if enquiring—what is wrong with him, he was all right just now!

Radhaji notices precious ornaments and clothes lying on the chariot. She is amazed.

"Udhava! You have brought these clothes and precious jewellery?"

Udhava is speechless. Like a culprit, he hangs his head down. Radhaji continues, "Udhava! The King of Mathura dare not send clothes and ornaments for us! Udhava, most certainly these have been brought by you on your own. These glittering pebbles cannot repay the debt of butter and candy. Tell Krishna, that he can't repay that debt even in aeons. He has to always remain indebted."

Then, turning towards the Gopis she continues, "Dear friends! Fill this chariot with butter and candy . . . Udhava! Tell Krishna that this is a fresh debt!!"

Udhava is standing silently, his head hanging down. He does not utter a single word. Govind Hari!

Let us now conclude this story . . . Udhava returns to Mathura. When Krishna asks him about the welfare of Brij; Udhava bursts into tears. Lord smiles, "Udhava! You had gone to improve them, but it seems, you have also caught the contagion!"

Udhava falls at the feet of Shri Krishna, "Lord! Forgive me! I could not recognise you!!"

CHAPTER 5

From Mathura to Dwarika

After the death of Kansa, both his wives, 'Asti' and 'Prapti' return to their father, Jarasandha. Whenever Jarasandha noticed his widowed daughters, he vowed to take revenge. On learning that Krishna had ascended to the throne, he attacked Mathura. The Yadava army, led by Shri Krishna and Balrama fought valiantly and repulsed the attack. Jarasandha had to retreat, sorely disappointed. Repeatedly, Jarasandha attacked Mathura, but could never conquer it. His seventeen attempts were foiled. On the eighteenth attempt, he decided to attack Mathura along with his friend Kalyavan. From one side, it was Kalyavan, leading his army, and from the other side, Jarasandha leading his powerful cohorts! The news of this combined attack reached Krishna. It was impossible to engage both the armies in battle in a small place like Mathura. In fact, anticipating such a move, the king of Mathura had begun the establishment of a new kingdom on the sea shore in Saurashtra. This site for these Dwarikas was selected to provide protection to the helpless innocent people from the marauders. Such Dwarikas were scattered throughout Saurashtra.

As it was impossible to fight both the armies simultaneously, Shri Krishna devised a new strategy. He ordered a complete evacuation of Mathura before the attack so that these demons could not kill or enslave hapless citizens. Arrangements were made to shift willing people to the newly established kingdom of Dwarika. Shri Balrama and Shri Krishna, along with their army, left Mathura and proceeded in the direction from where Kalyavan was coming to attack. Their armies met on the way and a fierce battle ensued. This was not anticipated by Kalyavan. In fact, his soldiers were not prepared for such a grim battle. His army was completely decimated. Behold Lord Krishna's

Lila: Kalyavan was killed at the hands of Muchukunda Rishi¹.

On the other side, the soldiers of Jarasandha were loitering in desolate Mathura! On learning that Kalyavan had been badly trapped due to a preemptive attack by Yadava army even before he approached Mathura, Jarasandha hurriedly despatched his forces for help. However, even his desire to raze Mathura could not be fulfilled. Even before Jarasandha's army could arrive Yadavas had overcome Kalyavan and left for Dwarika. They followed the Yadava army over long distance, but Shri Krishna and Balrama had already crossed the Pravarshan Mountain.²

The forests on the way had been set ablaze. Jarasandha returned, totally broken and sorely disappointed. The Lord became Dwarika Dheesh³—the King of Dwarika.

During the discourse we have repeatedly made references to Sur⁴—the gods—and Asur⁴—the demons. Shri Krishna is the 'King' of 'gods'. Jarasandha, Kalyavan and Dantavakra⁵ are kings of demons. Both gods and demons—are devotees of the Lord. Both are blessed by the God. Then, what is the difference ?

The devotees of the same Lord, but so apart ! The reason for this does not lie in their worship of Lord, but in their outlook towards the fundamental purpose of life. Both—Sur and Asur—were friends and relatives— even father and son (Hiranyakashyapu and Prahlad)⁶. They stayed under the same roof—the difference was of principles, the guiding thoughts.

Asur said, "The Munificent Lord has sent Man for pleasures and merriment. Whatever has been created on this earth is to satisfy Man's desires. Woman is an object of enjoyment—only Man, the chosen son of the Lord, has complete right to gratify his senses. Woman is also like any other object. Whether a sister, or wife, or mother, she cannot claim the same rights, as Man. It is Man's prerogative to use woman in any way he likes. As with the soil, he can sow any seed he likes, trample her when ever he wishes ! He can sell her, gift her, like any other property ! Lord has created all the animals, birds, trees and plants only to satisfy Man's palate ! Eating flesh, drinking are perfectly in order".

1. मुचुकुन्द ऋषि 2. प्रवर्षण पर्वत 3. द्वारिकाधीश 4. सुर, असुर
5. दन्तवक्र 6. हिरण्यकश्यप एवं प्रह्लाद

Such were (in brief) the views of Asurs. Their leaders and sages had the powers to turn pitchers of water into holy wine. By casting their glance, they could transform an ordinary river into a river of wine from which their worshippers drank to their heart's fill—with utmost respect and devotion! Plundering and enslaving hapless people and helpless women was their sacrosanct right. Forcing their unfortunate victims to build palaces for them, to torment young boys and girls to satisfy their lust was their way of life . . .

I must clarify here that these Sur and Asur dynasties existed on this planet in 4000 B.C. and earlier and both were almost exterminated following fall of enormous meteorites on earth around that period. Our story does not concern the sects which have appeared in last two millenia. In fact even two sons of a father became Sur and Asur—they were real brothers (Vibhishan and Ravana, for example!)¹ . . .

. . . Sur said, "This is a mortal sin. Man has been sent, like the God Himself, for selfless service of all beings. Man is the gardener of this beautiful garden comprising all insentient and sentient beings. When the Lord Himself is performing the selfless service of all beings, the Man, His creation, ought to follow suit. A devotee is even more venerable than the Lord! And so is the status of Woman!" . . . I am not elaborating it here for the Lila of Narayan is in fact the exposition of Sur thought.

Dear devotees! Tell me frankly! If you have only one room to live and you have the weakness of the flesh, then would you not be forced to remove your parents from that room! You could not 'enjoy' yourself in their presence! That is precisely the reason, which forced Asur to declare "God does not reside in my body!". In fact the word Asur² in Sanskrit means "without God". The implication was clear: 'God' had to be deposed to a place high in the heavens, away from the body. The body had to be kept free from this 'guardian' so that it could freely enjoy!

In contrast, Sur declared, "God is within me. I am not away from Him—but united with Him. The unbreakable bonds of life tie 'me' with Him. In fact, there can be no moment of my life, without Him". That's why he was called 'Sur' and his other

1. विभीषण, रावण

2. असुर = 'अ' (रहित) + 'सुर' (ईश्वर)

brother, 'Asur'.

Asur denigrated and defiled women . . . made them slaves and harlots. Sur gave them respect and a privileged position in society, . . . even worshipped them as Nav-Durga¹!

Krishna symbolises the Sur thought! He is their leader. Vritrasur, Bhaumasur, Banasur² etc. are leaders of Asurs. Due to a drastic fall in the male population as a consequence of perpetual wars with Asurs, the Surs had to sanction polygamy to prevent exploitation of women. Even then the right to choose lay with the women—Swayamvar³. Another reason for this was that Asur traded in helpless girls. Therefore, to give full protection to women, to ensure that they begot children—how painful is the absence of children for ladies is well known!—polygamy was allowed. It was a compulsion of that age. In fact, Lord Krishna freed over sixty-four thousand hapless girls from the prisons of Bhaumasur alone!

Let me tell you, in brief, the secret behind these Dwarikas. These were established in the whole of Saurashtra district, along the sea shore. Yadava commanders kept vigil on these shores. As soon as the ships of Asurs, containing the girls caught by them for 'trade' approached the shores, messages were flashed through guards mounted on horses to all the Dwarikas. Stealthily, the Yadava commanders surrounded the ships from all sides and then waged a battle with them to free those prisoners. Krishna would then give them the divine message of Gita, provide them with some subsistence and secure an honoured position for them in society. My Krishna! The friend of the poor! saviour of the downtrodden! Could he be anything other than God Himself?

Now both Sur and Asur cultures are almost extinct. They have been replaced by new religions and sects. In the past there was no pettiness or regimentation of thought and principles. Ugrasena belonged to Sur culture while his son Kansa, under the influence of Jarasandha chose to be an Asur. They differed on principles. Asurs were equally proud of their heritage and, in fact, their culture was always more popular and luxuriant. Why?

The reason is not difficult to see. If you are advised to live

1. नवदुर्गा 2. वृत्तासुर, भीमासुर, बाणासुर 3. स्वयंवर

like the servant of all beings, serving and helping all, this mode of living is likely to have little appeal to you. On the other hand, if you are told that everything is only for your enjoyment, that you have complete suzerainty over everybody, this "way" of living will attract you immediately. That's why the principles of Surs were always unpopular. Asur were popular and therefore stronger and more 'prosperous'. The Surs were always on the run. But everybody was free to choose between the two ways of life. There were no barriers of family, lineage, caste or creed. Man was not so petty then!

. . . An incident which occurred a few years ago comes to mind. This Sanyasin was travelling. On the way he saw that an impressive school of a community was being constructed. This Sanyasin stopped to see the school. The religious leader of that community came out. He was visibly surprised on seeing a Sanyasin, more so when I saluted him and praised the school. He asked very frankly, "Don't you feel jealous on seeing this? We belong to a sect opposed to you?" This Sanyasin replied, "Sir! except one foolishness, we are all doing good work. Except this foolishness of confining humanity in narrow sects, everything else being done by us is for good of humanity. We educate people, how to be good citizens and we all teach them that God is one and He has created everybody. Don't we!

Dear Sir, the day this ignorant populace will truly believe us, don't you think we both will be rendered jobless! For, if the creator is one, they would ask, why should they be subdivided in different sects? They would all become one, and what would we do? You will prepare tea and I will bake cakes, and we will relish it together!" . . . Alas! if only our leaders and thinkers had not sacrificed human values at the altar of petty communalism! . . .

. . . Let us proceed further with our story . . . The Dwarikas of Krishna soon struck terror in the heart of the Asur Kings. Bhaumasur, the venerated Asur king, could not sell his imprisoned girls, for Krishna, the robber, was guarding the way! The Kathis of Saurashtra are in fact the descendents of Yadavas, who inhabited Dwarikas along with the Lord. It was their valour and humaneness which was channelised by the Lord to free thousands of hapless girls and other innocent prisoners held captive by the Asurs.

A number of Dwarikas surrounded the main Dwarika and were dispersed along the sea shore, right upto Bhāvanagar. Years ago this Sanyasin had the opportunity of visiting Dwarika. We were strolling along with our friends! . . . The shrouds of the dead past started getting torn apart! Dear Kathis! Still in the same clothes, with the same feelings and emotions! It appeared, as if nothing had changed with time. The Kathi ladies bedecked like the Gopis and the Kathi menfolk quite like the Gops! Even today, so simple, truthful, innocent and pious! Even today, they build a house, not for themselves, but for Mai¹ and Bapa¹ (the cow and the bullock) and live in that house under their feet. Keeping a flute in their hand, they go to far off pastures to graze the cows. Ever joyful, free from all inhibitions, the men and women folk can be seen dancing happily. The purity of their character can only be seen amidst them! A woman may go anywhere, anytime and no man dare cast an evil glance on her; for if one were to do so, he is certain to meet death! His killer would himself go to court and admit his crime. No question of telling a lie, and where is the need of a lawyer?

Not to speak of caning the cattle, even abusing 'Mai', 'Bapa' is unthinkable! Their 'Mai' (cow) and 'Bapa' (ox) are worth seeing. You will not find such healthy cattle anywhere in India. Both husband and wife go to fields for work, leaving their young children in the care of 'Mai', 'Bapa'. Even the imagination of that scene is so sweet! . . . A young baby is sleeping on the cot. On one side of the cot, Mai (cow) is sitting and on the other side is 'Bapa' (ox.) Both are chewing the cud. If the child is likely to fall down, they gently push him to the middle of the cot by their snout! Such a lila, six thousand years after My Krishna!!

Even their system of education is reminiscent of that hoary past. The child is sent to Gurukul soon after completing ten years of age. Even after such a long lapse of time, this place seems to have been left unscathed. Only Lord knows for whom all these scenes have been kept intact. Nothing has changed. Whom are they all waiting for? . . .

On reaching Veraval and Porbandar we noticed a beautiful blend of antiquity and modernity. The greatest surprise awaited us on the banks of Devika! For a few moments, it seemed

1. माई, बापा

unbelievable! A Tree bent at the same angle! Devika, quiet as before! Its banks, unaltered! The tree could not be more than a century old, but these events had occurred six thousand years ago! Why has nature kept that scene alive? It was here that the hero of Veda-Vyasa, hit by an arrow, breathed his last. It was here that Veda-Vyasa concluded the last of the Lilas. One was the hero of history, and the other of spirituality! Both joined together at the same place in Banlila¹. . . . And then the secrets of Mahabharata and Bhagvatam were unravelled!

1. बाणलीला

CHAPTER 6

Banlila

Dwarika, surrounded by three rivers—‘Devika’, ‘Hiranya’ and ‘Saraswati’. On both sides of this main Dwarika, stretched far away along the sea shore are numerous other Dwarikas . . . All teeming with prosperity, happiness and knowledge, prompting a divine life! And away from this all, a Sanyasin reclining against a bent tree on the banks of Devika, absorbed in deep sleep, in blissful meditation! The Lord Himself! From Gurukul to a ‘householder’ (Grihastha¹), then a Vanaprastha², and now a Sanyasin! A symbol motivating us to live a divine life in consonance with the Lila of Prakriti and Purusha³! Having renounced the world, Krishna is deeply engrossed in meditation, telling us that to adopt the appropriate Ashram⁴ at the proper time is the true Dharma of Man. The Lord is meditating! And suddenly, from another side appears a hunter. An arrow is shot from his bow which hits the sanyasin in his foot.

Realising the error, the hunter is penitent. “Oh Lord! What have I done? Mistaking you for a deer, I have wounded you?” The hunter bursts into tears.

“Do not be aggrieved!” the solemn voice of Lord resounded. “Today, you have, for the first time, realised the Truth. Infact, everytime you hit a deer by your arrow, it actually pierced my heart! Being their Atman, it was I who was being continually hit by your arrows! Know that I am in all beings. I—the Atman—am the protector and nourisher of helpless animals and birds. In you too, I am the Atman! Every arrow hits only Me. Go, and love all beings! Do not torment any creature! Nurture a feeling of love and kindness towards all. He, who serves, loves and worships all beings, knowing Me to be present in them, is my

true devotee! Only he knows Me truly! Only he worships Me truly! and only he truly obtains Me!!”

The wounded Sanyasin again forgives him and goes into meditation. Soon, the poison shows its effect. A divine light emanates from the body and diffuses into the sky and the inert body tumbles down into the lap of river Devika!

There is tremendous upsurge in Devika. The river, assuming the form of a goddess, wails in deep anguish and cries out to the two other rivers flowing nearby. Both rivers also manifest in the form of goddesses. . . . The Līlā (drama) is going on . . .

Devika: “Hiranya! Saraswati!! Today an unpardonable sin has been committed on the earth!”

Hiranya: “Devika! What has happened? Why are you crying?”

Saraswati: “What is the reason for your doleful moans?”

Devika: “A Sanyasin engrossed in meditation has today been mortally wounded by an arrow. His body is floating in my lap!”

Hiranya: “One cannot even think bad about a Sanyasin in meditation! One who even disrespects him is doomed for eternity. Who has committed this crime? Who is the Sanyasin?”

Devika: “The sanyasin is Lord Krishna Himself!”

Saraswati: “No! Devika? This could not be true!”

Devika: “Yes, Saraswati! It is Krishna! Look at his face, still engrossed in deep sleep! I am unable to tolerate this. I would pronounce a curse on this earth . . . Wherever on this earth, Sanyasins are hurt, the place will be accursed. There will be only ‘bodies’, but no divinity in them!”

Hiranya: “Where hermits and Sanyasins are hurt, that place will also be accursed by me. There will be ascetics but no true austerities (Tapas)!

Saraswati: “Today, the earth is also accursed by me. There will be scriptures, but no spiritual knowledge!”

When all the three goddesses had thus cursed the earth, the Lord Mahavishnu manifested Himself in His divine four-armed form embellished with conch, discus, mace and lotus! All the three goddesses offer their obeisance and prayers. The Lord addressess them together, “Devika! Hiranya! Saraswati!! Why have you pronounced curses on the earth? Did you not know that

the hunter was none other than the Dharmaraja¹ (The Lord of Death) Himself? When the earth was not ready to let me go, due to its fond attachment for me, the gods in the Devalok² requested Dharmaraja to fetch me back. He told them that he did not have the temerity to bring me back, tied to his rope, like ordinary mortals. Then, on the advice of Devas³ he offered his salutation through the arrow to remind me that it was time to go back.

Devika! It is only you who become Devaki and give me 'body' by conceiving me in your womb. Hiranya! It is verily you, who become Yashoda and embellish the body. And Saraswati! It is you who become Radha and perform the Jnān-Līlā⁴ with me!

Knowing that all this was only My divine sport, My Līlā, why should you have cursed the earth?"

The three goddesses again bowed to the Lord, and in reply, enquired again, "Lord! When Dharmaraja saluted your holy feet through the arrow, what Līlā were you performing then?" Lord Mahavishnu: "That of a Sanyasin, in deep meditation". The goddesses: "Then, we have also cursed the earth only in the Līlā. Whenever hermits, sages and Sanyasins, engrossed in meditation are hurt, the earth will be accursed!" Lord Mahavishnu: "But! How does earth get accursed? In fact this curse has been pronounced on Me!" The three goddesses: "Narayan! That's precisely the reason for pronouncing the curse! Where were you going leaving us orphaned!"

Echoing from the background emerges, the voice of Veda Vyasa:

"Thus, the Lord, the creator, having been cursed, is present in every being as their Atman. Liberate Him! Give divinity to your body, purity to your asceticism and adopt, not holy books, but divine knowledge. Recognise yourself! I was only reciting to you, your own story, depicting before you, your own Līlā. Know thyself. Even today, it is this divine fire (the Devika) which transforms food into a human body in the womb of a woman. Mother Nature is the Yashoda who embellishes this body and the knowledge contained in Vedas is the Saraswati (the Radha) with whom you have to perform Jnān-Līlā.⁴ Embellish

1. धर्मराज 2. देवलोक 3. देव 4. ज्ञान-लीला

your body with divinity! Be sincere in your austerities! Adopt the blissful knowledge from the scriptures! Be free from this curse by becoming one with Krishna—your own Atman. Enter Devalok¹—the Golok¹! May you be blessed!”

The creator of these mysterious Līlās, Veda-Vyasa was unparalleled in his own era and remains unchallenged even today! Another Vyasa is yet to be born! The līlā of birth of Veda Vyasa, the Ukhal² Līlā, the Parījāt² Līlā. . . . and numerous other potent Lilas, I have not been able to narrate to you. This is only an introduction to the Līlās of Lord. The day you truly listen to His story, nothing else in the universe will appeal to you. There is no doubt about it! . . . Let us now conclude this discourse!

On one side we find Kansa, Jarasandha and Kālyavan! On the otherside is the Lila of Shri Krishna! *Only he, who kills ‘Pootna’, ‘Aghasur’ ‘Bakasur’ and other ‘demons’ in childhood itself and destroys the ‘Kansa’ in his eleventh year. . . only he lives a meaningful life. Only he can escape this dragnet of ‘Asti’ and ‘Prapti’. But ‘Jarasandha’ will continue its onslaughts on this Mathura—your body. Only he who lives subservient to his Atman—the Krishna—can defeat this ‘Jarasandha’ seventeen times. ‘Jarasandha’ would most certainly break the Joints (Sandhis) of sensualists. The eighteenth time, Jarasandha will attack along with Kālyavan. Only he can escape this attack, who enters Dwarika (the Brahm-Randhra³—the pineal gland, seat of Atman!) via the Pravarshan (where there is continuous rain (Varsha) of worship of the Lord!) mountain. Jarasandha can do him no harm. Kālyavan the (time!) will be finished . . The Yogi is beyond time!*

Lord Shri Krishna was a pious celibate. His first marriage, to Rukmani, took place on her repeated entreaties to save her from demon, Shisupala. The story is quite long. . . . we will recall it some other time! The story of Ashta Siddhīs has also been left out . . . for some future occasion!

After killing Bhaumasur, about sixty four thousand imprisoned girls were freed by the Lord. The society was reluctant to take

1. देवलोक, गोलोक

2. ऊखल लीला, पारिजात लीला

3. ब्रह्मरन्ध्र

them in its fold. Those hapless, innocent girls wanted to commit mass-suicide, for society was not willing to give them food and shelter even after labelling them as fallen harlots. When Krishna learnt of it, He was in tears! Addressing those unfortunate ladies, the Lord said, "Dear pious Ladies! I am aware of your anguish and misery. Even after freeing you from Bhaumasur's prison I have not been able to secure a place of honour for you. The fault is entirely mine! You are pure, faultless, why should you commit suicide? If society is reluctant to accept you, please do not be distressed. The King of Dwarika accepts you! He is your husband, your father, your son! Kindly lead a respectable life; the onus of your protection and livelihood is on me, the King of Dwarika. None will look down upon you. You are worth our worship. You are indeed the Devaki, the Yashoda! If society accepts you unhesitatingly and with due honour and you also accept them, then please proceed, for I am present everywhere in all beings!"

Lord Krishna also advised the Kshatriya¹ and Brahman¹ Yadavas not to torment fellow human beings in the name of religion, for true devotion to Lord lies in the service of poor, helpless and downtrodden. The Lila of the Lord is really unfathomable, . . . His story infinite.

When Lord Krishna decided to take Sanyasa, Udhavaji came to see him. On realising that Shri Krishna is actually preparing for his final departure from earth, he burst into tears. Krishna consoled Udhava, taught him the essence of spirituality and the secrets of Dharma. Lord said: "Udhava! My kith and kin, the dear Yadavas have also turned their face from religion. Soon they would be annihilated. They, who could not be killed by valiant warriors by swords and arrows, would be destroyed by blades of grass! They have forfeited their right to live on this earth. *Man has been sent by the Lord in this beautiful garden—the earth, as its devoted gardener. It is His explicit command that just as He—the Atman—is nourishing and protecting all living beings, so should man serve this earth! He enjoins us to be the Ishwara of all beings and to attain His beautitude through their service.* But alas! these Yadavas have today forsaken this fundamental tenet. . . . The gardeners have taken to building

1. क्षत्रिय, ब्राह्मण

castles by destroying the garden! They are destroying trees, flowers and fruits, the animals and birds of this garden, . . . and therefore, the time of destruction of these gardeners themselves has come! A drowning man clutches at straw—but today these straws would be the cause of destruction of Yadava clan, for whenever there is decline of Dharma and upsurge of Adharma, this is the natural outcome!”

Pious Udhava wept bitterly. “Lord! Even you are departing! Hell would definitely be let loose on this earth! What will happen to me?” Lord replied, “Dear Holy Udhava! Badri-forest (present Badrinath) is a place eternally protected by me. Go there and observe austerities! The ‘Ashta-Siddhis’¹ (eight supernatural powers) are my eight ‘wives’! ‘Yoga’ is Radha! I adore Radha (Yoga) much more than my wives (‘The Siddhis’)! In fact, I am always worshipping at her feet!” The Lord tells Udhava, in His own unimitable style, the secret of God-realisation. One is the way of “eight super-natural powers” and the other of ‘Yoga’. Each wife has a feeling, the Lord is ‘my’ husband! He is mine! There is that petty-possessiveness! On the other hand, how can Radha have any “right” over the Lord! How can she say that Krishna is “mine”? She (The Yogi) therefore says, ‘Krishna belongs to every one! I am His!’ This is the subtle difference. The Siddha² says, “I gain Siddhis”. Yogi says, “I dissolve myself in the Lord!” This is the difference!

Radhaji says, “Krishna is an ocean and I am just a cup! If I wish to possess Krishna, He would also have to become a small cup! This will not beseem His dignity! The ocean will have to be confined to a cup! Why not I fill myself (the cup) up, and be devoted to that ocean. I will get the honour of the ocean and there would not even be a wave of disturbance in it! The path of Siddhis is of narrow possessiveness. The path of Yoga leads to direct union with Lord. Radha is the beloved daughter of Vrish-bhanu.³ When does Sun (Bhanu) ascend into Taurus (Vrish)? In the fierce heat of summer—The months of May and June! The austerities (Tapas) of the ascetics are verily symbolised by Radha. In Sanskrit, the word Radha also means ‘brilliance of

1. अष्ट सिद्धियाँ

2. सिद्ध

3. वृषभानु = वृष + भानु

flames'. As Kabirji says, "Prem gali ati sānkri, jā me do na samāye"¹. Literally: the street of love is very narrow, in it two people cannot be accommodated'.

Radhaji, i.e. the path of Yoga, cannot tolerate duality! Lord and myself, why should we be two! This is intolerable. Why should I (Yogi) not submerge myself in that ocean and be one with it! In this strait only one can be accommodated! In the path of devotion, Krishna and Radha can never have separate identities. They are one. Whenever they are separate, they are only halves!

"Bin Radhey! Govind Adhey!" (Lit: Without Radha, Lord Govinda is incomplete—only a half!) . . .

. . . Having taken leave of the Lord, pious innocent Udhava has come to Badri forest. Even the thought of annihilation of Yadavas and the Ban Lila sends shivers down his spine. Repeatedly, his eyes brim with tears. Udhavaji had tried his best to persuade Shri Krishna against both these forebodings, but the Lord before entering meditation somehow consoled Udhava and bade him goodbye! He projected before Udhava a picture of the events to come and convinced him that this was inevitable!

'Badri' means Ber³ (a fruit, jujube). A forest of Ber trees is the Badri-forest. In this forest Udhavji made an image of Lord Krishna and got totally absorbed in meditating on Him. He eats only Ber, bathes in the 'Taptakunda'⁴ (Literally: heated pond) and is continuously purifying himself by meditating on Krishna. Time is fleeing inexorably.

One day, on getting up from his meditation seat he finds Lord Krishna standing in front of him, smiling gently. He has fresh Bers in His hands. Udhavaji bows to him. Lord says, "Udhava! I have been waiting for you, for so long. I am extremely hungry. Go and quickly wash your face! We will eat these Bers together!"

Udhavaji quickly goes to the Taptakunda. As he bends his head to wash his face, he finds in water, instead of a reflection

1. प्रेम गली अति साँकरी, जा में दो न समाये ।

2. बिन राधे, गोविन्द आधे ।

3. बेर

4. तप्तकुण्ड

of his face, the smiling face of Lord Krishna, His hair bedecked with a peacock feather as usual! He is startled! He thinks, "The eyes are deceiving me! Probably, due to continuous meditation on Lord, this image has got imprinted in my eyes! That must be the reason." He sprinkles some water on his eyes to wash that image off and then looks into water again. But Lo! Once again, it is the face of Krishna! Repeatedly he washes his face and eyes and looks into the water but is unable to see his 'own' face! Everytime, instead of Udhava's face, Krishna's face appears in the pond. There, a few yards away, the Lord is calling him, "Udhava! Please hurry up! I am extremely hungry What are you doing there? Please come".

Udhava returns. He stands in front of the Lord with folded hands and prays, "Lord! Now, what is this Lila of yours? Why is Udhava seeing your face instead of his own face in the water?"

"Oh pious, guileless Udhava! When you were trying to acquire me through the path of siddhis, I was becoming another Udhava! Today, oh holy one! Dedicated to me you are 'uniting' with me through meditation. Udhava, you yourself think! How can there be now any 'form' of yours other than mine! Oh Udhava! you have 'yourself' become the Krishna!!" . . . The Lord disappears.

Pure, holy Udhava opens his eyes. On a heap of Bers is the beautiful idol of Narayana. Udhava beholds himself! With wonder and amazement he is examining his each limb! Udhava has indeed become Krishna! Radhaji's words reverberate, "Udhavaji Why do you not dissolve yourself in that Supreme Brahman whom you want to acquire?" "Oh Radha! Oh Radha! I hail Thee!!" resounds the whole body of Udhavji.

The Badrinath shrine is a memorial to this episode. Two idols are kept there. One of them, the idol of the Lord is kept on Bers, just as Udhava had done! These Bers do not decay! The other idol is of Udhava, who got transformed into Krishna! Both the idols are alike—no difference at all. How could there be? For six months the idol of Lord on Bers is worshipped and for the other six months of the year the other idol is worshipped! Govind Hari!!

The choice between petty possessiveness and the Yoga of utter dedication, complete surrender This is the purport of Krishna-Udhava story! The Lilas of the Lord are the true

nectar for our lives!

Dense clouds agglomerate, hover in the sky but do not shower! Will plants be benefitted? No! On the contrary they would be infested with pests! Similarly, if the 'knowledge' of Vedas and Upanishads remains hovering in the mind-like the dense clouds—and doesnot 'shower' in the conduct, in daily life can there be any happiness? No! on the contrary it will only infest our life with the 'pests' of arrogance and vanity! That is why Lord engages Himself in these Lilas to make this knowledge 'practical'. Bring the 'Lord' to your conduct!

Remember! When Yadavas forsook religion, they were destroyed by tender straws of grass! Are you not being ruined by these 'straws' of sorrow, anguish, and privation! Every home, every life is painful like a cancerous wound! Every moment is pinching. Every moment is tearing you apart! And when d you get peace? . . . Only on funeral pyre! This is the saga of that great culture, being destroyed even now, by mere straws!

Enjoy this nectar of Krishna Lilā everyday, day after day! Imbibe this in your conduct, in your daily life! You will be freed from all vexations, all diseases.

The arms of the clock are approaching each other. They also wish to give up the duality and become one! The time for 'appearance' of Lord is fast approaching. Let us also, like the arms of the clock, be one with the Lord! Let us close our eyes and unite with him. Let us manifest the Lord within our bodies. Give birth to Krishna—the holy and pious thoughts! Let us remember this, everyday of our life.

The Lilā of appearance of Lord—as practised even today—is equally wonderful. The devotee cuts a cucumber to symbolise the manifestation of Lord. This cucumber is only a mis-representation. In the past, a special type of cucumber—called Phoot Kakri¹—was used for the purpose. This Phoot Kakri bursts open automatically when it ripens fully and is used as an example in that divine Mantra, called the Maha Mrityunjay Mantra²: (Literally—the sacred couplet which delivers one forever from death), which is the Mantra for this occasion:

1. फूट ककरी

2. महामृत्युञ्जय मन्त्र

Trayambkam Yajamahe Sugandhim Pushti Vardhanam,
Urvarukamiv Bandhnan Mrityor Mukhshiy Mamritat.

त्रयम्बकम् यजामहे सुगन्धि पुष्टि वर्धनम् ।

उर्वारुकमिव बन्धनान् मृत्योर्मुक्षीय मामृतात् ॥

Let us understand it! 'Trayambkam' means the three fold phenomenon of generation, operation and destruction; 'Yajam', through Yajnas; 'Ahe', Oh!; 'Sugandhim' . . . conversion of dead matter to fragrant vegetation and into 'Pushti'—robust bodies . . . by 'Vardham' . . . nourisher, the Lord Vishnu, also called 'Vardhman'¹. The first line thus means: Oh Vardhman (Lord Mahavishnu)! Through the processes of Generation, Operation and Destruction ($G + O + D = \text{GOD}$) you continually transform dead ashes into delicious fruits, and these fruits into multifarious stout bodies by performing this Yajna by becoming their Atman.

'Urvarukamiv' . . . like that Phoot-kakri which bursts open due to its own inner heat . . . just like that 'Phoot Kakri', Oh Krishna! Oh Lord! having purified myself with the heat of austerities, let me burst out from this body, as my own inner flames—the intense desire to meet You—are becoming uncontrollable; so that—'Mrityor Mukhshiy Maamritat' . . . I overcome these bonds of transmigration and become one with the Infinite!

Oh Lord! Shower such blessing on me! Oh Krishna! Oh Madhava! I seek refuge in thee! You, yourself declared to Arjuna, in Gita that you are the Brahma, the Vishnu, the Shiva! You are 'Gayatri' among metres, 'Ganga' amongst the rivers, 'Himalaya' amongst the immovables and the Atman—seated in the hearts of all beings! Oh Krishna! In spite of your continual presence within it, my body is devoured by Jarasandha and Kālyavan, what greater calamity and misfortune could befall me! Oh Narayana! Oh Krishna! Take pity on me! Grant me the courage to observe solemn vows and let peace never forsake me! Oh Narayana! Let You be 'born' in my Life, today! Let all Asuras be destroyed! Today, Let this Jiva, your humble servant, gain entry into Dwarika! and become yours forever! Oh King of Dwarika! You are everywhere, in all beings! Let me see nothing else but You, sing of none else but You, receive nothing save

1. वर्धमान

from You! Let every moment of my life be dedicated to your service! Let every breath and heartbeat sing Your glory, Lord! Like the two arms of the clock about to meet each other, Let me also become one with You, My Lord! My Indweller!

. . . . The two arms of the clock have become 'one'. The sacred moment has arrived! Like the arms of the clock, unite Jiva and Atman! Dear devotees! Let your physical eyes be closed and your 'inner eyes' open to behold Krishna taking birth in you! Obeisance to all beings! Dear devotees! Accept the humble salutations of this sanyasin! You are all my Krishna, my Gopal! Obeisance to all! Whether inside or outside, Krishna, I find only You! Eko Brahma—Dviteeyonāsti¹! (Literally—there exists only one Brahman, and nothing else!) . . Worship Krishna! Submerge yourself in that vast ocean of love! Dive deep in that ocean! Meditate! And engrossed in meditation listen to the tunes emanating from His Divine flute! Dance in 'Vrindavan', sing fervently and get lost in Him! Govind Hari! Hari Om! Narayan Hari!!

1. एकोब्रह्म द्वितीयो नास्ति

Glossary of Hindi/Sanskrit words

Aghasur: (अघासुर)	One of the demons sent by Kansa to kill child Krishna. The demon assumed the form of a Python.
Akrur: (अक्रूर)	One of the ministers in the court of Kansa. A noble man, he was an intimate friend of Nand-baba, the (foster) father of Shri Krishna.
Alaknanda: (अलकनन्दा)	The river which flows near Badrinath shrine.
Ananda: (आनन्द)	Spiritual bliss
Arjuna: (अर्जुन)	One of the Pandava brothers, an intimate friend (and relation) of Lord Krishna and an acknowledged warrior (archer) of his time.
Ashrama: (आश्रम)	The four spiritual orders of life: celibate student (Brahmacharin), householder (Grihastha), retired life (Vanaprastha) and renounced life (Sanyasin). The term is also used to indicate the hermitage of a sage.
Ashtami: (अष्टमी)	The eighth day of the (waxing) lunar fortnight.
Ashta-Siddhi: (अष्ट-सिद्धि)	The eight divine 'powers' which are attained by Yogins.
Asti: (अस्ति)	One of the two wives of Kansa, the other being Prapti. Both were daughters of demon king Jarasandha.
Asur: (असुर)	The demonical beings.
Atman: (आत्मा)	The Universal soul of which each individual soul is an infinitesimal part.
Atma-Jwala: (आत्मज्वाला)	The manifestation of soul-force in the body, e.g. in the form of hunger.

Badrinath: (बद्रीनाथ)	A shrine of Lord Krishna in the Himalyas, one of the four holy pilgrimages of Indians.
Bakasur: (बकासुर)	One of the demons sent by Kansa to kill child Krishna. The demon assumed the form of a duck (in Hindi Bak), and hence the name.
Balrama: (बलराम)	Elder brother of Shri Krishna.
Banasur: (बाणासुर)	A demon friend of Kansa.
Banlila: (बाणलीला)	The divine sport (Lila) of Lord Krishna culminating in His giving up the mortal body on being hit by an arrow (Bân).
Ber: (बेर)	A type of jujube, eaten fondly by ascetics and sages.
Bhakta: (भक्त)	A devotee
Bhaumasur: (भोसासुर)	One of the demon-kings with whom Krishna fought a grim battle and released sixty-four thousand hapless girls held captive by him.
Brahma: (ब्रह्मा)	One of the manifestations of the Absolute consciousness, responsible for creation of this universe.
Brahmalok: (ब्रह्मलोक)	The 'heavenly' abode of Brahma.
Brahman: (ब्रह्म)	The impersonal aspect of the Absolute consciousness which pervades the whole cosmos.
Brahmacharin: (ब्रह्मचारी)	The celibate student.
Brahmin: (ब्राह्मण)	One who has the knowledge of the Brahman; the first vedic social order.
Brahmrandhra: (ब्रह्मरंध्र)	A gland in the upper part of the brain on which the Yogins meditate; supposed to be the seat of Atman.
Brij: (बृज)	Area around Gokul and Vrindavan where Lord Krishna spent his childhood.
Cheer-Haran: (चीर-हरण)	One of the divine sports of child Krishna in which he is alleged to have hidden the clothes of bathing Gopis.
Dantavakra: (दन्तवक्र)	One of the prominent demon kings who was killed by Lord Krishna.

Darpan: (दर्पण)	Mirror
Darshan: (दर्शन)	Revelation
Devaki: (देवकी)	The mother of Lord Krishna. Kansa was her brother.
Devata: (देवता)	Demi-gods
Devika: (देविका)	One of the three rivers surrounding Dwarika, the other rivers being Hiranya and Saraswati.
Devalok: (देवलोक)	The abode of Demi-gods, paradise
Dharma: (धर्म)	Righteousness underlying ethics
Dharmaraj: (धर्मराज)	Upholder of Dharma; the title is applied to the Ruler of Death, and also to Yudhishtira, the eldest of Pandava brothers.
Dharmatma: (धर्मात्मा)	One who follows Dharma.
Dhenakasur: (धेनकासुर)	One of the demons sent by Kansa to kill child Krishna; . . . so called because he assumed the form of a donkey (dhenaka, in Sanskrit).
Dhundhukari: (धुन्धुकारी)	A character in the epic Srimad Bhagwatam
Dwarika: (द्वारिका)	The seat of Lord Krishna's kingdom after he left Mathura; situated on the sea-shores of Saurashtra.
Dwarika-dheesh: (द्वारिकाधीश)	Literally, the ruler of Dwarika, i.e. Lord Krishna.
Dwapar Yuga: (द्वापर युग)	One of the four mythological eras based on the Vedic belief that the solar galaxy is going around a constellation Brahmaloaka with a period of $4,32,000 \times 71$ years. This period is divided into four Yugas; Satyuga, Tretayuga, Dwaparyuga and Kaliyuga.
Eko-Brahman-Dviteeyo naasti: (एको ब्रह्म द्वितीयो नास्ति)	One of the five great sayings of the Vedas emphasizing the fact that "all that exists is Brahman, there is nothing else!"

Gandeev: (गण्डीव)	The famous bow of Arjuna, earned by him after great austerities.
Gokul: (गोकुल)	The place where Lord Krishna was brought up.
Golok: (गोलोक)	The spiritual abode of Lord Krishna
Gop: (गोप)	The cowherd friends of boy-Krishna.
Gopi: (गोपी)	The cowherd girl-friends of boy-Krishna.
Gopal: (गोपाल)	Literally, the protector of cows, an epithet of Lord Krishna.
Gopal-Rasa: (गोपाल-रस)	A term coined to indicate the bliss of contemplation of Krishna in contrast to sensual delights.
Govinda: (गोविन्द)	Literally, herdsman, another epithet of Lord Krishna.
Grihastha: (गृहस्थ)	Householder (See Ashrama)
Gur: (गुड़)	Jaggery, (unrefined sugar)
Gurukul: (गुरुकुल)	Residential Schools of Vedic era which were invariably also the hermitage of a venerated sage who imparted both secular and spiritual knowledge to celibate students (Brahmacharins)
Hari: (हरि)	Literally, one who enchants, an epithet of Lord Krishna.
Hiranya: (हिरण्या)	See Devika
Hiranya- kashyapu: (हिरण्यकश्यपु)	One of the mightiest demon-kings, father of Prahalada, the great devotee of God.
Ishwara: (ईश्वर)	God, Personal form of Supreme Consciousness
Jagat: (जगत)	The world
Jagadamba: (जगदम्बा)	Literally, the mother of the world, epithet applied to manifestation of Supreme Consciousness in the form of Goddess.
Janmashtami: (जन्माष्टमी)	The day Lord Krishna was born.

Jara: (जरर)	Old age
Jarasandha: (जरासन्ध)	A mighty demon-king, father-in-law of Kansa.
Jiva: (जीव)	The individual soul, an infinitesimal part of the universal soul.
Jñān Līlā: (ज्ञान लीला)	The divine sport of Radha and Krishna which is actually a storehouse of spiritual knowledge.
Kāl: (काल)	Time, also death
Kāli-Dah: (कालिदाह)	The deep spot in the river where the serpent Kaliya lived.
Kāliya Nag: (कालिया नाग)	The name of a poisonous multihooded cobra which was killed by child Krishna.
Kālyavan: (कालयवन)	Mighty demon-king, a friend of Jarasandha.
Kansa: (कंस)	Lord Krishna's maternal uncle, who had chosen to be an 'asur'. He killed seven sons of Devaki born before Lord Krishna.
Kanhaiya: (कन्हैया)	The pet name of child Krishna.
Krur: (क्रूर)	Cruel
Kshatriya: (क्षत्रिय)	Warrior or administrator; the second Vedic social order.
Kathi: (काठी)	The inhabitants of Kathiawar, a district in Gujarat.
Kaurava: (कौरव)	The un-righteous cousins of Pandavas, whose greed and ill-treatment of Pandavas was responsible for the Mahabharata war.
Lila: (लीला)	The divine sport of Supreme Consciousness in its various incarnations such as Lord Krishna, Lord Shri Rama etc.
Lila Darpan: (लीला दर्पण)	Literally, the mirror Lila, implying that these divine sports of Lord are meant to be mirrors for Jivas to behold their true nature.
Mahabharata: (महाभारत)	The Great fratricidal war between Pandavas and Kauravas.

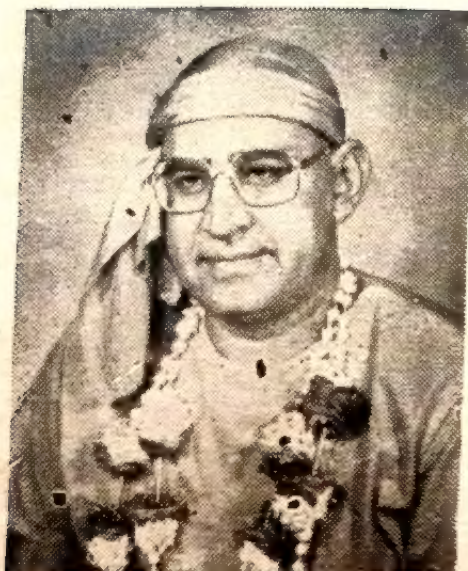
Maha-Mrityunjaya Mantra: (महामृत्युञ्जय मंत्र)	The Mantra (मंत्र) which can grant freedom from death (i.e. Liberation of jiva)
Mai-Bapa: (माई-बापा)	Literally means, mother and father, but refers to the endearing names used by Kathis for their bullock and cow.
Makhan: (माखन)	Butter
Makhan-Misri: (माखन-मिथ्री)	Butter and sugar candy—these were eaten fondly by child Krishna.
Mantra: (मंत्र)	A sacred text used as an incantation
Maya: (माया)	Illusion, the forgetfulness of one's relationship with the Supreme, also used to indicate the veiling power of Lord which causes this forgetfulness.
Muchukund: (मुचुकुन्द)	The name of the sage whose curse killed the demon Kalyavan.
Nag: (नाग)	Serpent
Nandbaba: (नन्दबाबा)	The father (foster) of Shri Krishna who was a chieftain of cowherds of Gokul.
Narayan: (नारायण)	An epithet for Supreme God.
Pandava: (पाण्डव)	The sons of Pandu, viz. Yudhishtira, Bheema, Arjuna, Nakul and Sahadeva.
Parikshit: (परीक्षित)	The grandson of Arjuna, who spent the last seven days of his life listening to Srimad Bhagwatam and got liberated.
Parijat-Lila: (पारिजात-लीला)	One of the profound divine sports of Lord Krishna centered around the celestial tree Parijat.
Phoot-Kakri: (फूट ककरी)	A type of cucumber which bursts open when ripe.
Pishacha: (पिशाच)	A demon.
Pootna: (पूतना)	The demoness sent by Kansa to kill the new born baby Krishna.

Pooja: (पूजा)	Worship
Porbunder: (पोरबन्दर)	A place in Gujarat.
Prahlad: (प्रह्लाद)	A great devotee, was the son of mighty demon king Hiranyakashyapu.
Prapti: (प्राप्ति)	One of the wives of Kansa, the other being Asti. (See Asti).
Pralambasur: (प्रलम्बासुर)	One of the demons sent by Kansa to kill child Krishna.
Pravarshan: (प्रवर्षण)	A mountain range on the way to Dwarika.
Preta: (प्रेत)	The mane of a deceased person.
Purusha- Prakriti: (पुरुष-प्रकृति)	The term Purusha refers to the Supreme as the personal God who creates the perceptible world by His nature, which is termed Prakriti.
Rahasaya: (रहस्य)	The secret
Radha: (राधा)	The "divine consort" of Lord Krishna
Ras Lila: (रास लीला)	The divine sport of Lord Krishna with the cowherd girls.
Ravana: (रावण)	The mighty demon king who was killed by Lord Ramachandra.
Rukmani: (रुकमणि)	The first wife of Lord Krishna, who had pleaded with Lord Krishna to marry her to save her from evil designs of demon king Shishupala.
Sanatan: (सनातन)	Perennial
Sandhi: (सन्धि)	Joints
Sansarin: (सन्सारी)	A worldly person, one who is engrossed only in worldly pursuits.
Sanskara: (संस्कार)	The past impressions or pre-despositions which are believed to be carried from birth to birth.
Sandipani: (सन्दीपनी)	The sage in whose hermitage child Krishna received his education.
Sanyasin: (सन्यासी)	One who has renounced the world (the fourth order of Vedic spiritual life)

Saraswati: (सरस्वती)	Refers usually to the Goddess of Knowledge, also the name of a river (See Devika)
Sethji: (सेठजी)	A name for the moneyed people of India.
Shankarji: (शंकरजी)	One of the manifestations of the Absolute Consciousness, responsible for destruction.
Shakat: (शकट)	A small carriage pulled by horses or bullocks.
Shakatasur: (शकटासुर)	One of the demons sent by Kansa to kill child Krishna.
Shishupala: (शिशुपाल)	One of the mighty demon kings. who had a long drawn enmity with Lord Krishna. He was finally slain by Lord Krishna at the time of Yudhishtira's Yajna after Mahabharata war.
Siddhi: (सिद्धि)	The divine power attained by Yoga.
Srimad Bhag- wad Gita: (श्रीमद्भगवद्गीता)	The holy book which contains the discourse given by Lord Krishna to Arjuna in the battle-field of Mahabharata which enabled him to overcome his despondency and fight the war like a Yogi.
Srimad Bhag- watan: (श्रीमद्भागवतम्)	One of the main epics of Sanatan Dharma wherein the complete life story of Lord Shri Krishna is described, besides the stories of other incarnations of the Supreme.
Sukadev: (शुकदेव)	The illumined son of the great sage Veda-Vyasa.
Sur: (सुर)	The demi Gods
Swamiji: (स्वामीजी)	The usual reverential title of a Sanyasin.
Swayamvar: (स्वयंवर)	The ancient institution of marriage in which the bride chose her groom from amongst eligible bachelors invited by her father.
Tapas: (तप)	Austerities meant for spiritual evolution.
Taptakunda: (तप्तकुण्ड)	Literally, a pool of hot water; refers to a pond near Badrinath Shrine
Trinavarta: (तृणावर्त)	One of the demons sent by Kansa to kill child Krishna.

Udhava: (ऊधव)	A very intimate friend of Lord Krishna.
Ugrasena: (उग्रसेन)	Kansa's noble father who was freed from prison by Lord Krishna after killing Kansa.
Ukhal Lila: (ऊखल लीला)	A profound divine sport of child Krishna, wherein he is tied to an Ukhal (a large Mortar) by mother Yashoda.
Vatsasur: (वत्सासुर)	 Demons of Kansa.
Vritrasur: (वृत्रासुर)	
Vanprastha: (वानप्रस्थ)	One who has retired from family life, the third order of Vedic spiritual life.
Vardhaman: (वर्धमान)	Another name of Lord Vishnu, the manifestation of the Supreme which is responsible for upbringing of this universe.
Vasudev: (वसुदेव)	Krishna's father
Vedas: (वेद)	The sacred books of Aryans compiled in their present form by sage Vyasa who is therefore also known as Veda-Vyasa. There are four Vedas, The Rig, Yajur, Sama and Atharva Veda
Veda-Vyasa: (वेदव्यास)	The great sage who compiled the Vedas, and wrote Mahabharata, Srimad Bhagwatam, Brahma Sutras etc.
Vedanta: (वेदान्त)	The most sublime philosophical speculations of Upanisads, the concluding portions of the Vedas.
Veraval: (वेरावल)	A place in Gujarat.
Vrindavan: (वृन्दावन)	The place near Gokul where most of the divine Lilas of Lord Krishna took place.
Vrishbhanu: (वृषभानु)	One of the cowherds whose daughter was Radha.
Yadava, Yadu- vanshi: (यादव, यदुवंशी)	Belonging to Yadava clan.
Yajna: (यज्ञ)	The Vedic sacrifice performed to propitiate the Supreme.

Yajnopavit: (यज्ञोपवीत)	The sacred thread ceremony of Aryans.
Yamuna: (यमुना)	The river on the banks of which Mathura and Vrindavan are situated.
Yama: (यम)	The God of death.
Yashoda: (यशोदा)	Mother (foster) of Sri Krishna.
Yoga: (योग)	Union with the Supreme; practices adopted to achieve this purpose.
Yogamaya: (योगमाया)	The personal Goddess manifesting the illusory power of the Supreme.
Yogi: (योगी)	One who practices Yoga.



The author of this book, His Holiness Swami Sanatan Shri, is the well known saint based in Lucknow. Swamiji combines a modern scientific outlook with his unique vision of our scriptures ranging from Rig-Veda to Puranas. With a mystic's insight he expounds the deep spiritual significance of not only the Vedas, Upanishads and Gita, but also of Srimad Bhagwatam, Ramayana and Mahabharata. True to the tradition of ancient Rishis, and propelled by overwhelming compassion, he demonstrates by his own example his precept of "Mind tuned to the supreme and hands serving the humanity" (मन में ध्यान, हाथ में सेवा). All the publications from his Ashram are distributed free of cost.

Swamiji is now also spearheading a movement, Vishwa Bharti Sangathan (विभास) devoted to the re-establishment of our ancient culture and spiritual values in their pristine form in the modern age. Swamiji can be contacted at Sanatan Ashram, Gaura Bagh, Kursi Road, Lucknow-7.

About the Book

The beauty of this book lies in blending of deep philosophy with a poetic and dramatic narration of some of the important events in Lord Krishna's life as enumerated in Srimad Bhagwatam. The secret of the divine sport of Lord Krishna—termed as Lilas—which has often been mis-interpreted is revealed in its full spiritual import through Swamiji's pen. Further, it brings out clearly the true purpose of human life and indicates the path to achieve it. It also has a message for the intelligentsia, the planners and leaders of the society. With the insight of a great visionary Swamiji has perspicuously brought out the deficiencies of our education system and the distortions in the sacred institutions of marriage and temple, and revealed their pristine glorious form which could tremendously strengthen the moral fabric of the society.

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